PEOPLE OF INDIA

TAMIL NADU

Volume XL

PEOPLE OF INDIA

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PEOPLE OF INDIA

TAMIL NADU

Volume XL

PART TWO

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A Note on the Series

There is an information gap on a very large number of communities in India, and whatever information that exists on them is scanty or needs to be updated. The Anthropological Survey of India (AnSI) launched a project on the People of India on October 2, 1985. The objective of the project was to generate a brief, descriptive anthropological profile of all the communities of India, the impact on them of change and development processes and the links that bring them together. This was in accordance with the objectives of the AnSI, which was established in December 1945. The AnSI has been pursuing biocultural research among different population groups from its eight regional centres. Its objectives have been redefined in the policy resolution, adopted in 1985, which commits this organisation to a survey of the human surface of India.

The identification of the communities and their listing began at an early period of our history, with Manu. Regional lists of communities figured in Sanskrit works. Medieval chronicles contained a description of communities located in various parts of the country. Listings in the colonial period were first undertaken on an extensive scale in 1806. The process gathered momentum in course of the Censuses from 1881 to 1941. In our compilation of the lists of the communities of India under the People of India project, we drew upon ethnographic surveys, the lists of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes drawn up by the Government of India, the lists of Backward Classes prepared by the Backward Classes Commissions set up by various state governments, and the list included in the Mandal Commission Report. We were able to put together 6748 communities at the start. This list was taken to the field, tested and checked, and, finally, 4635 communities were identified and studied. Later, another 62 communities were studied and three were deleted, bringing the total to 4694 communities.

Unlike surveys in the colonial period, which covered British India and a few princely states, our project covers the whole country, bringing within its ambit also those parts that had not been ethnographically surveyed earlier or where the survey had been done in a perfunctory way. Each state and union territory

was treated as a unit of study. It was decided to start with the investigation of the least-known communities, and then move on to a field study of the lesser-known and better-known ones. Investigators for the survey were identified for each area on the basis of their experience and expertise. Teams of investigators of the Survey, as well as local scholars, were set up for each State and Union Territory to plan the surveys, seek the co-operation of local scholars, generate and evaluate findings, and so on. Later, editorial boards consisting of local scholars — one or more of these were nominated as co-editor/s for each local volume — were set up for each State and Union Territory. We sought the co-operation of the State Governments in implementing the project, and this we received in ample measure, particularly from the Welfare and Backward Classes Departments of the State Governments, local officers of the Census of India, tribal research institutes, university departments of anthropology, other departments of local universities, etc. Local scholars participated enthusiastically in our project as well as in the seminars held by us.

The progress in the investigation and coverage of communities from October 2, 1985 to March 31, 1992 was steady and impressive. We were able to identify, locate and study 4635 communities — to which a few more were added as mentioned above — in all the States and Union Territories of India, out of the 6748 listed initially. As many as 500 scholars participated in this project, including 197 from 26 institutions. About 100 workshops and rounds of discussions were held in all the States and Union Territories, and, in these, about 3000 scholars participated. The investigators spent 26,510 days in the field, which works out to 5.5 days per community studied in the various States and Union Territories of India. Our scholars interviewed a large number of people, out of whom we have recorded only the key informants, *i.e.* 24,951. This works out to about five 'informed' informants per community. Of the informants, 4981 were women. Our instruction to the investigators was to study a community at two or three places, and in at least two or three cultural regions into which the larger States of India are divided.

Interviews were conducted in connection with the study of the communities in 3581 villages, mostly multicommunity

villages, and in 1011 towns and cities spread over almost all the districts of India, *i.e.* 421 districts and 91 cultural regions. We were able, thus, to study on an average a community at about two places. It should be noted that most of the smaller communities could be studied at only one place since they are not located in more than one area.

A major achievement of this project was the preparation of cartographic maps showing the distribution of the communities and the location where they were studied. About 4000 maps were prepared. Yet another achievement was the visual documentation of the people of India as part of the field operations. 21,362 photographs were generated, most of them in black and white, and a substantial number in colour, by amateur photographers.

At an early stage of our project, in March 1985, we decided to transfer the data to a computer. We were subsequently able to develop probably the first software in the country — and one of the first in the world — in ethnography, in close collaboration with the National Informatics Centre. From May 28, 1988, we started transferring the quantitative data collected in computer format to floppies. Simultaneously, the transfer of descriptive data (abstracts etc.) on to the computer also started at almost all the regional centres. We succeeded in computerising an enormous mass of data, and also in producing the first results of univariate analysis, by March 1990.

The descriptive material, running into 120 manuscript volumes, and the quantitative data contained in 257 diskettes, were released on October 1, 1990 by Sri Chimanbhai Mehta, Minister of State for Human Resource Development, in the presence of a distinguished audience in Delhi, for use by scholars at the Nehru Memorial Museum and Library, and at eight regional centres of the AnSI.

The phase of more elaborate analysis started in July 1991, in collaboration with the Centre for Ecological Sciences, Indian Institute of Science, Bangalore. This resulted in a voluminous output of analysed data, which have been presented in a comprehensive matrix consisting of the four categories of populations, the constitutional, religious, occupational and locational. These sets of data, together with a map, were released by Shri Arjun Singh, Minister of Human Resource

Development, on December 24, 1991. The last workshop on the People of India project was held at the Institute for Social and Economic Change in Bangalore, where the preliminary results of the analysis presented by the AnSI were discussed by distinguished scholars.

It should be noted that the study of the communities has been conducted in 3581 villages and 1011 towns situated in 421 districts of the States and Union Territories of India. The information was collected from about 25,000 of the 'learned' informants by our scholars, 500 of them, over the period 1985 to 1992. Therefore, the observations relate to this limited time-frame and to the universe of the ethnographic project titled 'People of India'. The percentages relate strictly to the responses made by the informants to the questionnaire contained in the schedule guideline and computer format, and to the queries made by the investigators at the places of investigation. The responses have been supplemented with the observations of the investigators, the secondary material from the Census, ethnographic records etc. The material has been checked and cross-checked by scholars, particularly local scholars, at many levels with other sources of information.

We are presenting the material assembled under the People of India project in two parts which are inter-related. The first consists of the 11-volume national series, five of which contain abstracts on all the communities across the length and breadth of the country. The data generated in this respect have been supported with the addition of information from Census and other secondary sources. These volumes include one on the Scheduled Castes, prepared as part of the celebration of Dr. B.R. Ambedkar's birth centenary, one on the Scheduled Tribes,and three on all the communities of India. Two volumes contain data on the languages and scripts and biological variation in Indian populations. Two other volumes present a quantitative profile of Indian society and communities, lists of communities and their segments, synonyms, surnames and titles. The remaining two volumes are an Introduction and an Anthropological Atlas.

The contributors to the national volumes on the SC, ST and all communities are listed in Volume VI. The Glossary given in Volume VI is common to all the national volumes. At the

end of each account we have given references to the texts from which we have quoted, or references for further reading. This is only illustrative. An exhaustive bibliography appears at the end of the national volumes, in Volume VI.

The second part comprises the State/Union Territory volumes, with detailed write-ups on each community of India.

Oxford University Press has been publishing the national volumes, including the revised edition of the first volume. A consortium of publishers has been set up to publish the material on States and union territories. Seven volumes each for the northern States, southern States and the islands, the central and western States are being published respectively by M/s. Manohar Publishers and Distributors (New Delhi), M/s. Affiliated East-West Press Private Limited (Madras) and M/s. Popular Prakashan Private Limited (Bombay). The eleven volumes on the northeastern and eastern States are being published by M/s. Seagull Books Private Limited (Calcutta), who also published the introductory national volume (first edition).

I trust this series on the People of India, which is based on a comprehensive anthropological survey of the country, will be found useful by all sections of our people, including students, researchers, teachers, social activists, administrators and political leaders. I hope we have laid the groundwork for a comprehensive ethnography of the people of India which needs to be continually updated and built upon by successive generations of researchers and scholars.

K.S. Singh

Foreword

Tamil Nadu derives its identity from its language, Tamil, which means sweet, or the sweet language. In early Tamil literary works, the word denotes the language, the people and their country. This part of the land, which was described by the Indo-Aryans as Dravida, a Sanskrit word, was also known indigenously as Tamilaham or the abode of the Tamils.

The colonial period witnessed the formation of the Madras Presidency, a large, heterogeneous territorial expanse which derived its identity from its capital, Madras. The origin of the word 'Madras' has been variously explained, from the Arabic 'Medirass' a cape or a coastal city, or from persons such as 'Madarasen', a fisherman, from 'Mandarondzu', a Telugu ruler, from 'Manda-rajya', as the southern peninsula was called, or from or Portuguese 'Madre du Deus'. From Madras was derived the term Madrasi which was once applied to all people living in the Madras Presidency, speaking the languages belonging to the Dravidian language family. Now the term Madrasi survives only in a few pockets of the country, used to describe Tamil speakers. Meanwhile, Madras has been replaced by Chennai which is derived from Chennappa, the father of the Naik who granted a lease of land to the East India Company. On this land a British settlement was developed and around it grew an Indian settlement called Chennappa-patnam. In popular parlance, this became the name in the vernacular for the whole place, including Madras.

Tamil Nadu has been described by physical anthropologists as a region with a high admixture of populations. This is explained by its long coastline lapped by three seas across which and from the mainland, came the people with morphological characteristics represented by the Australoid, the Negroid, the Mongoloid, and the Caucasoid groups. Wave upon wave of immigrants arrived, shattering the isolation of the autochthones and resulting in an "extensive intermingling of gene pools" (Sanghvi 1981). Flexibility in mating patterns was common. There is still not so large a difference among the Vellalar, Kallar and Parayan — now a scheduled caste who

once enjoyed a higher status — and some Brahman groups who were formed by converted non-Brahmans. The Irula, now a Scheduled Tribe, are closer to the high ranking communities. This tribe appears to have fled into the forest to escape harassment. As Sanghvi says, "There is no clear pattern revealed by the anthropometric distances in respect of social rank, except for the lack of closeness of Iyer [Smartha Brahman] with any other population". However, the Tamil Brahman is generally closer to Tamil non-Brahman populations than to Brahman groups elsewhere in the country.

The Anthropometric Survey of India taken up later generated the morphometic characters of the communities, living in different cultural zones of Tamil Nadu (Ahmad and Sreenath 1992) . This study reveals that various caste groups of Tamil Nadu show a homogeneous ethnic base with regard to their morphometic characteristics. Three caste clusters, comprising Agamudaiyan, Maravar and Kallar, as well as some middle-ranking caste groups *viz.* Kaikolan, Vellala, Idaiyan, Palli, Vaniyan and the Kusuvan, show greater homogeneity in their morphometic characters. The Brahman, particularly Iyengar/ Sri Vaishnava, and some non-Brahman are closer to each other in terms of morphological and genetical traits than elsewhere. The Brahman and the Karnigar, however, maintain a distinct morphometic identity, perhaps due to their strict connubial norms. The Irula and the Badaga, a Backward Community, maintain their identity separate from the rest of the caste groups of Tamil Nadu, as a result of their isolation in terms of mating practices.

According to this Survey, the people of Tamil Nadu are, generally short, below-medium in stature, and have a round head and medium nose. Their facial profile varies from long to broad face. In terms of dermatoglyphic traits, loops (42-71 per cent) preponderate over whorls (17-61 per cent). The pattern intensity index varies from 12.59 to 15.91. Incidence of colour blindness ranges from 0 to 7 per cent. The non-taster gene (t) is found in 40-67 per cent of individuals. The

sickle cell trait, though not reported in other communities, show, as high as 20 and 23 per cent incidence in Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes respectively. G6PD deficiency has been reported from Scheduled Tribes, ranging from 0 to 13 per cent. The B gene (7-48 per cent) invariably has higher incidence than the A gene (0.73-55 per cent). The frequency of the M gene varies from 41 to 63 per cent generally, except in the case of the Todas who return 87.5 per cent. There is a high incidence of Haplo-types r (0-35 per cent) and R^1 (50-92 per cent) of other blood groups, P^1 (25-67 per cent) and Fy_a (49-78 per cent), show wide fluctuations in their occurrence. The incidence of Hp_1 varies from 3 to 35 per cent. Biochemical traits show the frequency of different genes as follows : p_a (15-47 per cent), PGM_1 (44-80 per cent), ESD_2 (18-35 per cent), GLO_1 (17-28 per cent), Ak_1 (86-96), and PGD_A (89-99 per cent).

Identity is defined by language, territory, kinship structure, elements of culture, including material culture, folklore and other artistic traditions. Language is the most important marker of identity.

Tamil is spoken by the largest number of communities (209) followed by the other languages of the Dravidian language family, such as Telugu (70), Kannada (25) , Malayalam (21) and Badaga (4). These are followed by the languages spoken by the immigrants, such as Urdu (15) and Gujarati (5). Thirty-two small communities speak other Indo-Aryan languages : Banjari, Hindi, Kachchi, Marathi, Marwari, Punjabi, Saurashtri, Sindhi and Wagri. English is spoken by the Anglo-Indian community. In all, 24 languages are spoken in Tamil Nadu.It is interesting to observe that all tribes, such as the Irula, Kota, Soliga and Toda speak the tribal languages that belong to the Dravidian language family. There are 11 communities who are linguistically heterogeneous, speaking more than one language.

According to the 1981 Census (household language census), Tamil is spoken by the largest number of persons (41,045,591), followed by Telugu (3,988,467), Kannada (1,149,893), Urdu

(864,811), Malayalam (577,890), Gujarati (217,038), Hindi (111,589) and Marathi (65,196). There are 5,803 persons who speak Konkani and 2,585 persons who speak Gorkhali/Nepali. English is spoken by 27,392 persons and Tulu by 5,608.

Bilingualism is fairly widespread. According to the 1971 Census, Tamil speakers are bilingual in English (1,076,467 persons), Telugu (338,540), Malayalam (61,746), Kannada (37,545), Urdu (33,032), Hindi (17,142), Arabic (7,706) and Marathi (1,534). Telugu speakers are bilingual in Tamil (2,205,471), English (53,551), Kannada (32,318) and Hindi (1,484). Kannada speakers are bilingual in Tamil (516,070), Telugu (45,748) and English (10,209). Urdu speakers are bilingual in Tamil (326,508), English (18,968), Telugu (10,258), Arabic (4,145) and Kannada (2,812). Malayalam speakers are bilingual in Tamil (127,863), English (41,943) and Hindi (1,585). Gujarati speakers are bilingual in English (4,399) and Hindi (2,306). Hindi speakers are bilingual in Tamil (15,789) and English (5,570). Marathi speakers are bilingual in Tamil (27,814), English (4,589), Telugu (2,000), English (1,778) and Kannada (1,172). English speakers are bilingual in Tamil (16,834) and Hindi (1,586). Tulu speakers are bilingual in English (326) and Kannada (161).

The Tamil and Perso Arabic scripts are now in use in Tamil Nadu. The former is used by almost all communities, and the second by some Muslim groups and immigrants, the Parsi etc.

The ancient land of Tamilaham lay between the hills of Venkatam and the tip of Kanyakumari. It consisted of five micro-eco-zones (*tinai*) : *Kurinci* (hilly backwoods), *Palai* (parched areas), *Mullai* (pastoral tracts), *Marutam* (wetland) and *Neital* (the littoral) The Vetar and Kuravar (hunters and shifting cultivators) inhabited the Kurinci; the Maravar (warriors) the Palai; the Itayar (Idaiyar) (pastoralists) the Mullai; the Ulavar (ploughmen) subsisted on the Marutam; and the Paratavar (fishermen) settled along the *Neital*. These communities have been described by historians as clan-based descent groups dispersed into domestic segments (*kuti*).

In fact, in the Sangam and post-Sangam literatures, Tamilaham was described as the land inhabited by a large number of communities such as the Velir, who are identified with Vellalar, Karalar (agriculturalists), Kuravar (hillmen), Vedar and Vettuvar (hunters), Kurumbar and Idaiyar (shepherds), Paradavar (fisherfolk), Pulayar (who executed death sentences), Paraiyar (who proclaimed royal order), Tunnakarar (tailors), Kadambar, Eyinar, Marayar (martial community) and Panar (bards), Koottar (jugglers), Yavanar (merchants from Greece and Rome), Naga (serpent-worshippers), Vadugar (people from the North of Venkatam hills) and Kosar (people from the Tulu country). Later, ballad literature, like *Kuravanji* and *Pallu* describe the life-styles of the Kuravar and the Pallar respectively. The *Kuluva Natakam* describes the Kuluvar as trappers. Apart from these communities, there were the Brahman, generally described as Vadama (northerner) who were the custodian of the Vedas, the Buddhist and Jain monks, and the non-Brahman Arivar or Santror who were the learned men and lived an ascetic life. The descriptions of the capitals of the three monarchs contain an account of the local merchants, garland-makers, goldsmiths, potters, timekeepers and other occupational specialists living in separate streets, and of the people who were specialists in making ornaments from conch-shells and so on.

The relationship between the people of the forest (classified as *kurinci* in the Sangam eco-zones) and the people of the riverine plains (classified as *marutam*) was a complex one . The forest people preyed on the latter and looted their cattle, which was accepted as a way of life. The Pandyan and Chera rulers of the period recruited foot soldiers from the Maravar, Eiynar, Vedar and Mazhavar of the forests. Many of the Chola and Pandya rulers were said to have been the descendants of the Maravar and Kallar and, probably, the forest people. None in the Tamil country disputes this claim the Kallar and Maravar now make. The Vellala peasants do not question this. There is also evidence to suggest that Raja Raja I recruited as his warriors and chiefs members from deverse communities living at the margin of the Kaveri heartland. They were later incorporated within the wetland cultural- political system. Many members of the Vanniya Kula Kshatriya group of communities are, today, said to have been incorporated as the Padai-atchi's

(literally commanders), Muthu-rajas, Pallis, Nayakans and Gounders (of North Arcot).

Thus, the old notion that the society in Tamilaham was 'casteless' or 'classless' before the Brahmanic *jativarna* model was imposed on it is being re-examined by historians. It is now admitted that differentiation had emerged with the growth of plough agriculture. In earlier times, many communities, particularly occupational groups (blacksmith- Kolavan, potter - Kuyalar and others with specalised skills) are mentioned in Sagama literature, and they were placed in a hierarchy of sorts. The Brahmanical notions of *jati/varna* hierarchy, purity and pollution, reinforced the process of stratification already at work. These notions have not entirely gone away in the wave of the anti-Brahman movement. It should, however, be noted that the extent of exchange of food and water in Tamil Nadu as revealed by the People of India (POI) project is higher than elsewhere in the country. The historians have also been looking at the complex process of Tamilisation and Sanskritisation. The encounter between the speakers of the Dravidian languages and those of the Indo-Aryan lanuages had no racial overtone nor was there any physical conflict. It was a creative interaction of the two traditions which enriched life and culture. Those who came in were Tamilisted as they adopted the Tamil language and elements of the Dravidian kinship system. Various aspects of Tamil society and culture also witnessed the impact of sanskritic culture.

In the medieval period, the Jains prepared the lexicons of communities. Such lists of communities are many. It should be noted that during the first three decades of the 20th Century a number of castes (represented by Western-educated spokesmen) published their *jati puranas*. A number of them claim authenticity through reference made to their castes in lexicons written by the Jaina scholars known in Tamil as *Nikandu*. The two *Nikandu* reported most often are *Choodamani* and *Diwakaram*. This explains why ethnographic accounts in Tamil Nadu exist for a larger number of communities 265 (72.80 per

cent against a national average 62.05 per cent) than in other States. About 100 communities (27.47 per cent against a national average 16.89 per cent) have *jati puranas* and 143 communities (39.29 per cent against a national average 38.43 per cent) claim to have 'historical references'.

In the colonial period, the listings of castes started in the Madras Presidency in 1806 and passed through various phases till the ethnographic survey of the large territory produced the most voluminous ethnographic output. The seven volumes on *Castes and Tribes of Southern India* (1909) authored by Edgar Thurston, who was assisted by K. Rangachari, are unique for many reasons. First, these volumes were prepared under the aegis of the Ethnographic Survey of India launched in 1901. Secondly, the survey was carried out not by British administrators, as in other parts of India, but by the museologists located in Madras Museum, who had been carrying on such studies sporadically since 1894, particularly among the tribes of the Nilgiri Hills at high altitudes "when thermometre stood high in Madras city". Thirdly, the survey drew heavily on the published literature, including district manuals and district gazetteers. Information was also sought from "representative men" and through "own inquiries" and "replies to the stereotyped series of questions". It was noted that the replies were not "entirely satisfactory, as they broke down both in accuracy and detail". However, direct inquiries by the officers connected with the survey were restricted to "three months on circuit in camp, during which the dual functions of the survey — the collection of ethnographic and anthropometric data — were carried out in the peaceful isolation of the Jungals in villages, and in mofuossil (up-country) towers". These wandering expeditions afforded "ample evidence that delay in carrying through the scheme for the survey would have been fatal". Thurston also left a hilarious account of the encounter with the people who were surveyed and measured.

Thurston's ethnographic survey contains a detailed report on many, if not all, communities of South India, alphabetically arranged. South India subsumed what was then commonly known as the Madras Presidency, and its Dependencies, which included small feudatory states and also the large native states

of Travancore and Cochin but not Mysore (except for anthropometric measurement).

Since 1909, Madras — now Tamil Nadu — has emerged as an intensely researched region. Various aspects of its society history and culture, have been explored and studied by a number of distinguished scholars. The People of India project (POI), launched in 1985, covered all communities of present-day Tamil Nadu. Unlike the colonial ethnographic survey, the POI was undertaken by professional anthropologists and other scholars, in collaboration with the one of the country's oldest Departments of Anthropology, in Madras University, and other institutions. Unlike the colonial survey, the POI was based on intensive field work and on the analysis of quantitative data generated in the course of the study.

The POI project in Tamil Nadu generated information on 364 communities, which, incidentally, is the second largest number of communities in India. This may be because Madras, as the capital of Madras Presidency, attracted many communities and this region, even in the form inherited by Tamil Nadu, contained a substantial number of communities from the neighbouring states. The process of identification of communities started much earlier in this part of the country, with which went perks, privileges and power. Most of the communities studied by us were located in rural areas (209, 57.4 per cent) and in rural-urban situations (72, 31.6 per cent); only a few (13) were located in urban centres.

These communities are spread over seven eco-cultural zones of Tamil Nadu, which interestingly correspond to the earliest ecological and historical divisions mentioned in Sangam literature. Seven cultural zones have been identified by the POI project : (i) Nanjil Nadu, which includes the district of Kanniya kumari and shows the influence of Malayalam and the food habits of Kerala; (ii) Pandiya Nadu, consisting of the districts of Tirunelveli Kattabomman, Chidambaranar, Kamarajar, Madurai, Ramanathapuram and Dindigul-Anna; (iii) Chola Nadu comprising of the districts of Thanjavur, Tiruchchirappalli, Quaid-e-Milleth and South Arcot and (iv) Chera Nadu (Coimbatore and Nilgiri). These are the traditional strongholds of the Tamil language. The other three cultural zones

identified were (v) Kongu Nadu (Periyar and Salem), which figures in most of the old Tamil literature; (vi) Chetti Nadu (Pudukkottai and P.M. Thevar); and (vii) Tondai Mandalam (Dharmapuri, North-Arcot-Ambedkar, Tiruvannamalai-Sambuvarayar, Chengai-M.G.R and Madras), which exhibits the influence of the Telugu language and shares the cultural traits of Andhra Pradesh.

A few communities derive their identity from the territories they lived in and retain the territorial identity as prefixes, such as Kongu Chettiar, Kongu Vaishnava, Kongu Vellala Gounder, Sohiya Chettiar, Sozhiya Brahman, Sozhiya Vellalar, Nanjilnattu Vellala, Nanjil Mudali, Thondai Mandala Mudali, Thondai Mandala Saiva Vellalar, Pandya Vellala, Nattukkottai Chettiar.

The ecology of Tamil Nadu explains the presence today of the Scheduled Tribes, pastoralists, fisherfolk and peasants. The Scheduled Tribes include the Toda, Kota, Irular, Malai Paliyar and Malayali. There are pastoralists such as the Idaiyar and Toda, The fisherfolk include those who engage in inland as well as these engaged in sea fishing. The peasants comprise Vellalar groups, Kallar groups, Karalar, Malai Vellalar, Maravar groups, Muthuraja, Parkavakulam, Vallambar, Vettalaikaran, Kunnuvar and Valaiyar Muppar. Tamil Nadu has its own artisan communities — consisting of many groups of weavers, such as Padmasala, Devanga, Kaikolan etc., various groups of potters such as Kummara, Kulalan etc. and goldsmiths such as Kammalar etc., all subsumed under the all-embracing term, Viswakarma.

Most of the communities, 250, (68.68 per cent against a national average of 47.70 per cent) inhabit the warm and temperate region and a fewer (132) the moderate area (36.26 per cent against a national average 39.98 per cent). There is a larger number of communities inhabiting hilly terrain (*Malai*), 89 (24.45 per cent against a national average 25.83 per cent) showing penetration of people into the hills. As many as 307 communities (84.34 per cent against a national average 61.38 per cent) inhabit the plains. Tamil Nadu has the highest number of communities inhabiting the coastal regions 142 (39.01 per cent against a national average of 14.80 per cent). About 208 communities (57.14 per cent) live in high humidity areas and an equal number of communities are distributed in

low humidity regions. Medium rainfall is experienced by 281 communities (77.20 per cent against a national average 72.90 per cent) and as many as 194 communities (53.30 per cent against national average 47.14 per cent) live near thin forests, showing encroachment on forest.

Tamil Nadu has all along attracted immigrants. As many as 215 communities (59.07 per cent against a national average 59.98 per cent) claim to have immigrated to the present habitat in this State. Again, as many as 164 communities (45.05 per cent against national average 40.93 per cent) recall their migration in an oral tradition. But a lesser number of communities immigrated in the recent past — only 25 communities (6.87 per cent against a national average 80.76 per cent). These immigrants who became part of Tamil society include the Urumikkaran, Chakkiliyan, Arundhatiyar, Anuppan, Kappilian, Velama, Kambalattan, Latin Naicker, Kannada Naickan, Raja Kambalattan and Uppilian.

There are also communities who are spread over adjoining States, such as the Adi Andhra, Adi Jambuvulu, Adi Karnataka, Balija, Bhattraju, Chakala, Cheramar, Dasari, Devanga, Dudikula, Golla, Holeya, Hegde, Kasai, Kattunaicken, Koracha, Kshatriya Raju, Kulla, Kuruba, Kurumba, Madiga, Mangala, Malasar, Mannan, Mappilla, Munduvan, Niyar, Oddar and Paniyan. Tamil Nadu has one of the largest concentrations of the Scheduled Castes (now called the Dalits - the Harijan nomenclature has been dropped) such as the Adi Dravida, Ayyanvar, Bharathar, Devendrakulattan, Koliyan, Kudumban, Panar, Pannadi, Paravan, Parayan, Puthirai Vannan, Samban, Semman, Valluvar and Vettiyan. There are 41 Scheduled Castes (11.26 per cent against a national average 16.20 per cent) and a much smaller number of scheduled tribes 28 (7.69 per cent against a national average 13.72 per cent).

Tamil Nadu has reported change of religion on a larger scale (19.51 against national average 14.70 per cent). The State accounts for a larger concentration of the religious minorities. The Tamil Muslims are unique in that they speak the Tamil language and practice Dravidian kinship (except uncle-niece marriage). The oceanic links explain the presence of Tamil Muslim communities such as the Marakkayar, Kayalar, Labbai,

Rawther etc. Tamil Nadu has also the largest concentration of Christians, drawn mainly from the ranks of the Scheduled Castes and backward classes. While we have not studied religious sects in this project, we have studied those sects among the Christians, which have become partly endogamous communities. The Christian segments of some communities have been studied together with the original ethnic group, because the two still share many a trait, such as marriage.

Our data suggest that within a linguistic-cultural region, such as Tamil Nadu, there is a larger sharing of traits among communities across the religious divide. These traits include consumption of food based on crops grown locally, dress, kinship structure, many aspects of culture, local elements of life-cycle ceremonies, participation in activities of a socioreligious nature and in political processes and movements. Tamil communities have reported a higher level of exchange of water and food, sharing of religious shrines, participation in festivals. They have also reported a relatively marked rise in the emergence of "modern linkages", such as entrepreneurs, doctorss and engineers and of leadership at village and regional levels. The classical traditions in arts in Tamil Nadu are more visible to outsiders than folk traditions, but the latter, as reported under the POI project, are deeprooted and as vibrant.

There are a larger number of 'regular' non-vegetarian communities 247 (67.86 per cent against a national average of 49.77 per cent). Only about 50 communities (13.74 per cent) are reported to be pure vegetarian. As many as 127 communities (34.39 per cent against 29.92 per cent) take pork and 62 communities (17.03 per cent against 15.71 per cent) consume beef. Rice (*arisi*) remains the staple cereal (358 communities/ 98.35 per cent against national average of 88.18 per cent), followed by great Indian millet, pearl millet (61/16.76 per cent), *ragi* (217/59.62 per cent against 14.20 per cent) and wheat (49/13.46 per cent). Among the pulses, gram (318/87.36 per cent against a national average 73.20 per cent) and redgram (320/87.91 per cent against 65.65 per cent) and blackgram (243/66.76 per cent against 63.04 per cent) and green gram (186/51.10 per cent) are the most consumed. Peas and beans (188/51.65 per cent against 39.57 per cent) and roots and tubers (322/88.46 per cent against 71.52 per cent)

are taken by a majority of the communities. Groundnut oil is widely consumed by 348 communities (95.60 per cent against a national average 54.26 per cent) followed by sesamum (88/24.10 per cent against 8.37 per cent). Alcoholic drinks are consumed by a larger number of people (280/76.92 per cent against 66.49 per cent). The white revolution accounts for a sharp increase in milk consumption (304 communities 83.52 per cent and of milk products 319 87.09 per cent. Taking snuff is most widespread (74.73 per cent against a national average of 15.55 per sent).

Social divisions are widely reported among as many as 276 communities (75.82 per cent). The communities are heterogeneous as suggested by the presence of groups/subgroups among large communities such as the Vellala (20), Maravar (12), Chettiar (11) and Kallar (7). We have used the term group for an endogamous unit and subgroup for a non-endogamous unit. However, our investigators have reported "subgroup endogamy" which is of course, changing. At the time of the analysis of national level data, Tamil Nadu reported phratry in one non-tribal community, the Malai Vallala, and no moiety. The investigators have reported in this book the existence of phratry among three communities and moiety among three. The existence of phratry and moiety among non-tribal communities is unique. Interestingly, the Tamil word *kilai* is the common term for clan, lineage and phratry.

In Tamil Nadu, the communities placing themselves in the *varna* order are fewer than elsewhere. There are 19 Brahman groups, 37 groups which claims to be Kshatriya, including groups of the Vellala, Maravar and Vaniyar, and 22 Vaishya groups, including the Chettiar. There are a very large number of Shudra groups, the highest in the country (134). However, about 55.77 per cent of the communities place themselves in the middle order, which is much higher then the national average of 46.83 per cent. This is an indication of aspiration towards upward mobility.

The traditional divisions into left-hand and right-hand

communities, which showed up in a number of ways — including the pattern of settlement — in the past, has almost ceased to exist, with each community conscious of its status in the new political system.

The traditional notion of social mobility is summed up in the Tamil saying, "A Kallar may come to be a Maravar. By respectability he may develop into an Agamudiyan (a section of the Vellala) and by slow degree, become a Vellala from which he may rise to be a Mudaliar". High-sounding honorofic titles such as Naicker or Nayakkan and Gounder are shared by many communities.

Community endogamy is the norm as returned by 353 communities (96.98 per cent). Monogamy is also the norm reported by 363 communities(99.73 per cent). Polygyny, both sororal (81/22.25 per cent against a national average of 14.67 per cent) and non-sororal (88/24.18 per cent against a national average of 24.70 per cent) have been reported. The Toda practised fraternal polyandry, but are now reportedly practising monogamy. Adult marriage has emerged as a major trend, as reported by 347 commuities (95.33 per cent against a national average of 89.06 per cent).

Marriage by negotiation is widely practised among as many as 359 (98.63 per cent) communities, followed by other modes such as mutual consent (63/17.31 per cent). *Thali/mangalsutra* is the widely used symbol of marriage, followed by the toering. Tamil Nadu has the largest concentration of consanguineous forms of marriages: crosscousin FSD marriage is reported by 351 communities (96.43 per cent against a national average of 44.01 per cent), MBD is considered obligatory by 353 communities (96.98 per cent against a national average of 51.09 per cent), uncle niece marriage by 272 communities (74.73 per cent against a national average 20.19 per cent). These forms of marriage are affected by a growing demand for dowry in cash and kind (51.92 against 39.03 per cent). Interestingly, Tamil Nadu has a lesser incidence of hypergamy and hypogamy and of junior levirate and sororate, but a higher incidence of

senior sororate. Child-marriage is on a much smaller scale. Parallel-cousin marriage has been reported by a smaller number (11 communities 3.02 per cent. In fact, the religious minorities, such as the Tamil Muslim, prefer cross-cousin to parallel-cousin marriages.

The rule of residence is patrilocal and is widely prevalent in as many as 354 communities (97.25 per cent). Many also increasingly prefer neo-local residence (50/13.74 per cent against national average of 10.20 per cent). A smaller number of 1.37 per cent communities have reported matrilocal residence. Among the caste Hindus, the Kondaiyam, Kottai and Maravar practise matrilineal descent while the Kottai Pillai follow the rule of matrilocal residence. Among the Muslims, the Marakkayar and Kayalar follow the rule of matrilocal residence. Remnants of matrilineal connections survive. The first or the first two deliveries by a daughter are at her mother's place. Nuptials are preformed at bride's residence. Tonsure of the female child is widely reported. Marriage in a *mandapam/pandal* is a typical Tamil institution. Pre-delivery or delivery rituals are more common than elsewhere. A majority of the families report emergence of nuclear families (343/94.23 per cent). The vertically extended family has been reported by a smaller number (130 35.71 per cent) of communities. Property is divided equally among sons in 308 communities (84.62 per cent against a national average of 79.40 per cent). Daughters inherit the moveable property, particularly the jewellery of the mother. More communities bury rather than cremate the dead.

Female infanticide has been reported in some pockets of Tamil Nadu. The data on gender relationship generated by the POI project suggest that the status of women is low in a larger number of communities 276 (75.82 per cent against a national average of 72.19 per cent). Interestingly, women's status is reported as equal in 86 communities (23.63 per cent). Also, Tamil women's participation is relatively high in social functions (346/95.05 per cent against a national average 89.19 per cent), rituals (352/96.70 per cent against a national average of 88.48 per cent), religious functions (344/94.51 per cent against a national average of 78.96 per cent). Many also perform more ardaous household roles, such as bringing water (347/95.33 per cent against a national average of 88.98 per

cent) and collecting fuel (256/70.33 per cent). They are also engaged in economic activity (324/89.01 per cent), animal husbandry (220/60.44 per cent) and agriculture (217/59.62 per cent).

Land is the major resource of a vast majority of communities 269 (73.90 per cent against a national average 64.10 per cent) and is mainly controlled by the individual (262/71.98 per cent against a national average of 65.01 per cent). Land reforms in Tamil Nadu explain the larger number of landowners and landholders 142 (39.01 per cent against a national average 31.89 per cent). The pressure of population on land is, *inter alia*, the reason for the larger incidence of landless (215/ 59.07 against 48.19) Communities. Settled cultivation is pursued by 235 communities (64.56 per cent against national average of 53.57 per cent) and shifting cultivation by seven communities. Many are engaged in self employment (233/64.01 per cent), government service (304/83.52 per cent), private service (227/ 62.36 per cent), business (215/59.07 per cent), labour (209/ 57.42 per cent) and trade (125/59.07 per cent). A few are engaged in trapping of birds and animals (10/2.75 per cent), hunting and gathering (9/2.47 per cent), animal husbandry (88/24.18 per cent) and pastoralism (12/3.30 per cent). There are 113 artisan groups. Fishing is practised by several communities (26/7.14 per cent), such as the Pattanavan, Sembadavan, Karaiyalan, Valaiyan, Kadaiyan, Paradavar and Mukkuvan, who are distributed along the Coromandal coast of Tamil Nadu from Madras to Kanniyakumari.

With the growth of the economy there has been a diversification of occupation. There has been a shift from fishing to agriculture (Sivalakkara), from salt making to agriculture (Uppilian), from priestly functions to self-employment (Brahman). Many traditional occupations, such as tonga service, have declined. The best documented example of occupational shift has been of the Nadars who moved from toddy-tapping to agriculture and trade, and now to industry, computers and politics. The Brahman communities have also moved into sectors

like industry. As one of their informants said, we have moved out of St. Fort George onto Mount Road!

The deep religiosity of the communities in Tamil Nadu shows through the larger percentage of the communities worshipping family and regional deities, deities of the wider pantheontion and their ancestors. The celebration of all rituals is on a larger scale. The temple is the centre of festivals. A vast majority of the communities are followers of Hinduism (299/82.14 per cent against a national average of 76.35 per cent). They are followed by Christians (65/17.86 per cent against a national average 7.31 per cent) and Muslim (23/6.32 per cent against a national average 12.60 per cent). There are also followers of Jainism(3) , Sikhism (11), Judaism (1) and Zoroastrianism (1) and tribal religion(13).

The Tamil Nadu communities favourably perceive their access to various aspects of the development process such as education (78.57 per cent boys and 70.88 per cent girls), health (92.31 per cent favour modern medicine), well irrigation and drinking water, communication (85 to 98 per cent). Village are connected by roads and railways. Tamil Nadu has been a pioneer in family welfare (92.31 per cent), its success attributed to female literacy (70.88 per cent), access to family welfare facilities, and popular consciousness promoted by political parties. The acceptance level of the family welfare programme is relatively higher among religious minorities. Tamil Nadu has also pioneered the midday meal programme. However, with growing pressures of population and urbanisation, the tribes have been losing their land rapidly, and the share of such weaker sections, in the benefits of development, has been on a smaller scale. The threat to the environment is underlined by the heavy dependence on firewood (96.98 per cent) and depletion of forests.

K.S. SINGH

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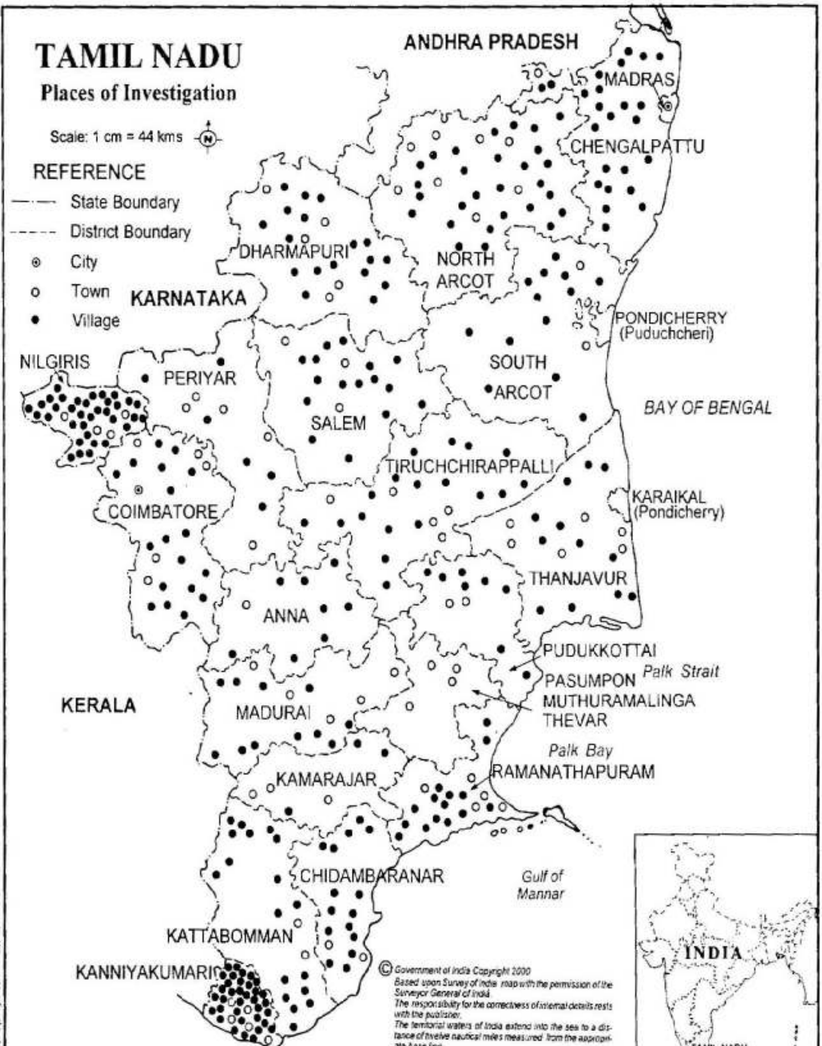
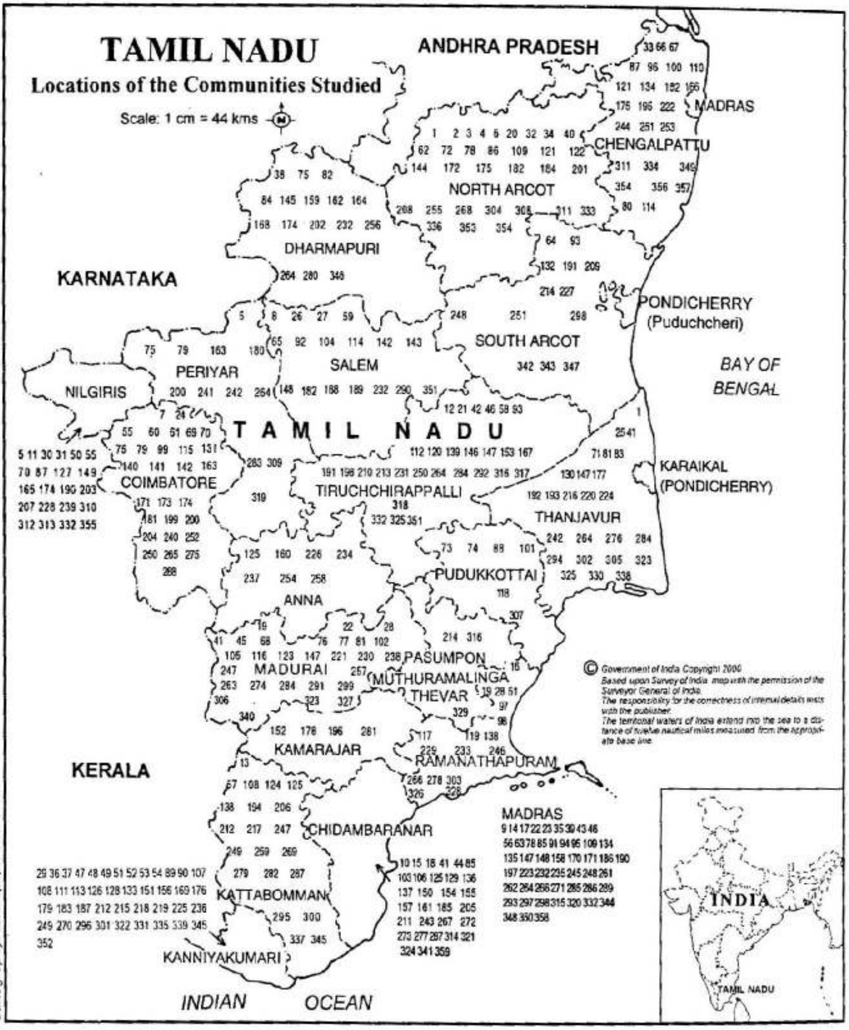
TAMIL NADU
(Distribution of Cultural Zones)

Cartography: ttk Maps, Madras - 44



Cartography: ttk Maps. Madras- 44



Cartography: ttk Maps, Madras-44

LIST OF COMMUNITIES

No.*	Community Name**
1	Achakara Vellalar
2	Adi Andhra
3	Adi Dravidar
4	Adijambuvulu
5	Adi Karnataka
6	Agamudiya Vellalar
7	Agamudiya Vellalar Christian
8	Agaram Velan Chettiar
9	Ahmadiya
10	Alavan
11	Alu Kurumba
12	Ambalakarar
13	Ambaneri Maravar
14	Anglo-Indian
15	Anil Kottai Maravar
16	Anjukottu Maravar
17	Ansari
18	Anuppan
19	Appanadu Kondaiyamkottai Maravar
20	Arcot Vellalar
21	Arunattu Vellalar
22	Arundhatiyar
23	Arya Vysya
24	Ashtandra Golla
25	Ashtasahasram Brahman
26	Attur Kilnad Koravar
27	Attur Melnad Koravar
28	Ayira Vysyar
29	Ayyanavar
30	Badaga
31	Badaga Christian
32	Baig
33	Bander
34	Bandi
35	Beri Vysya
36	Bharathar
37	Bharathar Christian
38	Bhatraju
39	Bohra
40	Bondil
41	Brahacharanam Brahman
42	Brahman Christian
43	Chakala
44	Chakkiliyan
45	Chakkiliyan Christian
46	Chattada Srivaishnava
47	Chayakkaran
48	Chekkala
49	Cheramar
50	Cheruman
51	Chettu—Elur Chetti
52	Chinnarasingam Saliyar
53	Chunnambu Paravan
54	Church of South India
55	Dasa Palanjika
56	Dasari
57	Dayare
58	Desikar
59	Devanga
60	Devanga Christian
61	Devendrakulathan
62	Dhakkani
63	Dhobi Muslim
64	Dikshithar Brahman
65	Dobba Koravar
66	Dombara
67	Dudekula
68	Eesanattu Kallar
69	Eravallan
70	Ezhuthachan
71	Fakir
72	Gajula Balija
73	Gandarvakottai Kallar
74	Gandharvakottai Koravar
75	Gangadi Vokkaligar
76	Gangaikula Vellan Chettiar
77	Gangavar
78	Godda
79	Gudi Vokkaligar

*The numbers here correspond to the numbers in the map 'Locations of the Communities Studied' (p. xlii). **Community name as given in text.

80 Gudu Guduppandi
81 Gurukkal
82 Hegde
83 Hiranya Kesiyal Brahman
84 Holeya
85 Idaiyar
86 Idiga
87 Irular
88 Isai Vellalar
89 Illathu Pillaimar
90 Illathu Pillaimar Christian
91 Jain
92 Jangam
93 Jati Pillai
94 Jew
95 Jhetti
96 Jogi
97 Kadaiyan
98 Kadaiyan Christian
99 Kadar
100 Kaikolan
101 Kaikolan Christian
102 Kallar Christian
103 Kallar Kula Tondaman
104 Kal Oddar
105 Kalveli Gounder
106 Kambalattan
107 Kambar
108 Kammalar Christian
109 Kamma Naidu
110 Kanakku Pillai
111 Kanikaran
112 Kaniyala Vellalar
113 Kaniyan
114 Kannada Saineegar
115 Kannadiya Naicker
116 Kappiliar
117 Karaiyalan
118 Karalar
119 Karana Maravar
120 Karkatha Vellalar
121 Karna Sale
122 Kasai
123 Kasukkara Chettiar
124 Katesar
125 Katesar Christian
126 Kattiyakaran
127 Kattu Naickan
128 Kavuthi
129 Kayalar
130 Keeramangalam Chettiar
131 Kempatti
132 Kepmari
133 Kerala Mudali
134 Khatri
135 Khoja
136 Koliyan
137 Koliyan Christian
138 Kondaiyamkottai Maravar
139 Kondareddi
140 Kongu Chettiar
141 Kongu Chettiar Christian
142 Kongu Vaishnava
143 Kongu Vellalar
144 Koodai Koravar
145 Koosa
146 Koothappar Kallar
147 Koracha
148 Koravar
149 Kota
150 Kottai Vellalar
151 Krishnavaka
152 Kshatriya Raju
153 Kudukuduppai Tottiyan
154 Kudumban
155 Kudumban Christian
156 Kudumi Saliyar
157 Kuluvan
158 Kummari
159 Kunchitigar
160 Kunnuvar
161 Kuravar
162 Kurichchan
163 Kuruba
164 Kuruman
165 Kurumba
166 Kusavan
167 Labbai
168 Lambadi
169 Latin Catholic
170 Madari
171 Madhwa Brahman
172 Madiga
173 Maha Malasar

174 Mahendra
175 Mala
176 Malakkuravan
177 Malaiman Udaiyar
178 Malai Paliyar
179 Malai Vedan
180 Malai Vellalar
181 Malasar
182 Malayali
183 Malayan Saliyar
184 Mangala
185 Maniyakkaran
186 Maniyattikkaran
187 Mannan
188 Mannan Dasari
189 Man Oddar
190 Mappilla
191 Maraikayar
192 Maratha
193 Maratha Brahman
194 Maravar Christian
195 Maruthuvar
196 Maruthuvar Christian
197 Marwari
198 Mavilan
199 Modavandi
200 Monda Golla
201 Mon Golla
202 Morasu Vokkaligar
203 Moundadan Chetty
204 Muduvan
205 Mukkaniyar Brahman
206 Mukkuvan
207 Mullu Kurumba
208 Musugu Balija
209 Muthuraja
210 Muthuraja Christian
211 Nadar
212 Nadar Christian
213 Nagaram
214 Nagarathar
215 Nair
216 Namdev Maratha
217 Nangudi Vellalar
218 Nanjil Mudali
219 Nanjilnattu Vellalar
220 Nathaman Udaiyar
221 Nattar Kallar
222 Narikoravar
223 Nawaiyat
224 Niyogi Brahman
225 Nulayar
226 Oddar
227 Oddar Christian
228 Odiyar
229 Oochan
230 O.P.S. Vellalar
231 Padaiyachi Christian
232 Padmasaliyar
233 Pagadai
234 Palliyan
235 Pamula
236 Panan
237 Pandaram
238 Pandya Vellalar
239 Paniyan
240 Pannadi
241 Panniandi
242 Pannirendam Chettiar
243 Paravan
244 Parayan
245 Parsi
246 Parvatharajakulam
247 Pathan
248 Pattanavan
249 Pattariyar
250 Periasuriur Kallar
251 Perumal Mattukkaran
252 Perumkollar
253 Pichugunta
254 Podikkara Vellalar
255 Ponnai Koravar
256 Poosala
257 Pramalai Kallar
258 Pulayan
259 Pulukka Maravar
260 Puluvar
261 Puthurai Vannan
262 Qureshi
263 Raja Kambalattu Naicker
264 Raju
265 Ratnagiri Vellalar
266 Rawther
267 Reddiar

268 Sadhu Chetty
269 Saiva Chettiar
270 Sakkaravar
271 Salivahanam
272 Samban
273 Samban Christian
274 Saurashtra
275 Savalakarar
276 Sembadavan
277 Sembadavan Christian
278 Sembinattu Maravar
279 Semman
280 Senaithalaivar
281 Sennelkottu Maravar
282 Sheikh
283 Sholagar
284 Sholia Brahman
285 Sikh
286 Sindhi
287 Siruthali Maravar
288 Siviar
289 Smartha Brahman
290 Sooramari Oddar
291 Sozhia Chetty
292 Sozhia Vellalar
293 Sri Vaishnava Brahman
294 Surithaman
295 Syed
296 Syrian Christian
297 Tambiran
298 Tamil Jain
299 Tamil Kannadiyar
300 Tarakkan
301 Thandan
302 Thanjavur Kallar
303 Thevar
304 Thogataveera Kshatriya
305 Tholuva Naicker
306 Thondai Mandala Mudaliar
307 Thondai Mandala Mudaliar Christian
308 Thondaimandala Saiva Vellalar
309 Thoraiyar
310 Thorayar
311 Thoti
312 Toda
313 Toda Christian
314 Tondaman
315 Traivarnika Vysya
316 Udaiyar Christian
317 Uppilian
318 Urali Gounder
319 Urali Sholagar
320 Urikkara Naicker
321 Urumikkaran
322 Vadakku Saliyar
323 Vadama Brahman
324 Vadugan
325 Vaidiki Brahman
326 Valaiyar
327 Valaiyar (Mooppar)
328 Valayan
329 Vallambar
330 Vallanattu Chettiar
331 Valliyoor Saliyar
332 Valluvar
333 Vaniyar
334 Vannan
335 Vannan Christian
336 Vanniyakula Kshatriya
337 Vanniya Maravar
338 Vathima Brahman
339 Velakathalai Nair
340 Velama
341 Velar
342 Vellaiyan Kuppam Padaiyachi
343 Vellaiyan Kuppam Padaiyachi Christian
344 Vellala Mudaliar
345 Vellalar Christian
346 Vellikkai Vellalar
347 Veppur Parayan
348 Vetan
349 Vettaikkaran
350 Vettiyan
351 Vettuva Gounder
352 Vira Saivar
353 Virakodi Vellalar
354 Vishwakarma
355 Wynad Chetty
356 Yadava
357 Yanadi
358 Yerukula
359 Yogeeswaran

KANIKARAN

The Kanikaran, who call themselves Kanikar and Kannikarar, are referred to as Kanikka by others. They affix 'Kani' to their names. In the past, writers (Subrahmanya Aiyar, 1903; Thurston, 1909; Hutton, 1931; Census of India, 1961) have referred to the Kanikaran by such synonyms as Kaniyan, Kanikkar, Velanmar, Malai Arasan and Malavedan. The literal meaning of the term Kanikaran is 'hereditary proprietor of land'. The Government of India recognises them under the name Kanikaran and has given them the status of a Scheduled Tribe.

The Kanikaran inhabit many parts of Kanniyakumari District and the Shencottah Taluk of Tirunelveli District. In Kanniyakumari District, Kanikaran settlements are found generally where the Tambraparani, Kotheyar and Masipatti rivers emerge into the plains from the forest. The present habitat of the Kanikaran is easily accessible because of the development of such villages as Pechiparai, Peruncheni and Papanasam. The forest in this region is rich in timber, teak, rosewood and blackwood. The area also has plantations of cardamom, tea, white pepper and rubber.

According to the 1981 Census, the total population of the Kanikaran in Tamil Nadu is 3698, of whom 1878 are males and 1820 females. Except for three, the rest are rural people.

There is some difficulty in tracing the origins of the Kanikaran, though ethnographic and historical accounts of the community exist. According to one version prevalent among them they lived in the mountains of South Travancore. It is recorded that they migrated to Papanasam taluk when they were loaned to the Singampatti Zamindar to clear the forests. Another version is that they originally belonged to the Madurai and Tirunelveli districts. They narrate that their ancestors migrated from the Pandyan territories beyond Agastyakutam under pressure from superior forces and never returned to the low country.

A legend prevalent among the Kanikaran traces their origin to Lord Siva. Lord Siva once suffered from a disease which made his golden torso black. One of the *devas* informed Siva

that a people called Velanmar, who lived on Earth, could cure his disease. When the Velanmar living in Chitrakannimala were asked to cure Lord Siva, they quarrelled among themselves instead. Angered, Siva took the ring from his right finger, chanted 21 mantras and threw it at the Earth. All the Velanmar died except seven women near whose settlement the ring fell. When the women saw it, each one tried it on her fingers. As a result, they all conceived and gave birth to seven children who became rare scholars very early. They then went to meet Lord Siva, chanted a mantra called *peppu* for seven days continuously and cured him of his illness. Siva gave them gifts, blessed them and sent them back to Chitrakannimala. According to the Kanikaran, these seven persons were their ancestors.

The Census of India (1961) says that the Kanikaran were the hill people who helped the King of Travancore against the sons of the Ettuvettu Pillaimar, got 102.5 *kanis* of land (*kani* denotes a measure of land) from the king and the freedom to move freely in the hills in the southern part of Travancore. Hence these hill people came to be known as Kanis. These stories indicate that the Kanikaran are the regional inhabitants of the mountains of south Travancore. During the process of States re-organisation, the southern part of Travancore, *i.e.* Kanniyakumari District, became a part of Tamil Nadu.

The Census of India (1901) describes the appearance of the Kanikaran as follows: "The Kanis are a dark but strong race of medium stature and active habits. Both men and women grow alike their hair and have it tied round in a knot at the back of the head. In modern days, many have adopted the front tuft of the indigenous Hindus of the low-land". But nowadays, only old men tie their hair into a knot at one side; younger men cut their hair.

Bioanthropological information, such as population structure, dermatoglyphics and nutritional status are available on them. Their findings are as follows: sex ratio is 977.5; mean age of women at marriage is 16.15; child-woman ratio is 534.6; general fertility rate per 1000 married women aged 15 to 49 years is 218.75; infant mortality rate is 178.6.

The Kanikaran speak Malyalam among themselves and Tamil with other communities. They use Tamil script.

The men wear dhotis which are used as loin cloths and put a towel (*thuni*) on the shoulder which can be used as a turban also. The women part their hair in the middle and tie it into a knot at the back. The women wind a long cloth, called *cheram*, around their waists and wear a loose blouse called *raveeka*. Women wear chains made up of beads and shells around their necks. Women get tattooed.

The Kanikaran are nonvegetarian, but abstain from eating beef. Their staple foods are tapioca and rice. They know how to prepare many delicious and nutritious dishes out of tapioca. They use groundnut and coconut oils for cooking. They also eat roots, tubers and fruits which they gather from the forest. In the past, they did not drink liquor, but now they do. They do not consume milk products but are fond of coffee and tea. The men smoke *beedis* and the women chew tobacco and betel nuts.

The Kanikaran consider the Brahman, Nadar and Ezhava as groups superior to them in the social hierarchy. They have two phratries. Each phratry (*illam*) is a matrilineal exogamous group. One is a wife-giver and the other is a wife-taker. In terms of blood relationship, each phratry is called *annathambi* (brothers' phratry), but in terms of official relationship one is called by the other as *machambi* (brother-in-law phratry). The two phratries are called *muttillam* and *menillam*. The Kanikaran have their own story of the origin of these two pharatries. Once, they found a dead elephant in the forest, and all the Kanikaran claimed the dead elephant. They fought each other and became two groups. Those who saw and claimed the rear and hind portion of the elephant formed the *muttillam* and those who saw the front and claimed the trunk and frontal portions became the *menillam*. Each phratry has several clans called *illam*. The clans included in the *mutti* are Kai, Palamala, Talamala, Kurumilla and Perim. Those included in *menikam* are Mangot, Mut, Peringalathi, Vol, and Vellanat.

Child marriages were once common among the Kanikaran, but not now. The age at marriage varies from 16 to 18 years for girls, and 20-25 for boys.

The Kanikaran prohibit marriages with parallel cousins. A few cases of hypergamy and hypogamy are found among them.

Monogamy is the norm. Polygyny is permitted only in case the first wife is barren. Junior sororate is also permitted. The modes of acquiring mates are by service, elopement and by negotiation. A vermilion thread or *thali* and *poomalai* (flower garland) are the main symbols of marriage. Giving a bride-price has been recorded in the past, but Kanikaran elders say they never practised it. A kind of dowry is given by the bride's father, in the form of a bill-hook, chopper and two brass vessels full of grain and pulses, to the father of the bridegroom. Though the Kanikaran are a matrilineal tribe, the rule of residence is patrilocal. But there are a few cases of matrilocal residence. Widow remarriage is permitted.

The Kanikaran live in nuclear families. The family is known as *kanikudi*. A joking relationship is permitted between sister-in-law and brother-in-law. The avoidance relationship is between daughter-in-law and father-in-law. In the matter of inheritance, the Kanikaran follow the traditional *marumakkathayam* system, property being inherited by the sister's children. Though this system has weakened in other parts of Tamil Nadu and Kerala, most Kanikaran prefer this system. Now, however, they follow a system whereby ancestral property is inherited by the nephews and self-acquired property by the sons. Though the Kanikaran are a matrilineal tribe, the head of the family is the eldest male member.

According to Thurston (1909), the Kanikaran used to send all their women into the seclusion of the dense jungle on the arrival of a stranger, but this was seldom done now. However, even now, on seeing strangers and mere acquaintances, the women walk into their houses and do not come out until the guests leave. If a male outsider enters a house to see a male member, the women go out by the back door, a regular feature in all Kanikaran houses. Within their community, however, the women have equal status. They have a role in economic, social and religious activities and even in the mechanism of social control. They not only contribute to the family income, they also control family expenditure.

The Kanikaran observe pre- and post-delivery rituals and restrictions. During the fifth month of pregnancy, the wife's close relatives bring edibles, *palagaram*, to the pregnant woman.

During the seventh month, the married women perform *vayathu pongal* and offer *pongal* to the pregnant woman. The pregnant woman is taken to her natal home for the first delivery in the eighth month. A special hut is made for the delivery. During the delivery, the husband has to stand adjacent to the delivery hut. An elderly female relative attends on the delivery. If the child is a boy, the women loudly utter *kuravayidal* with joy, if a girl they keep silent. They observe birth pollution for seven days. On the seventh day, the mother and child go back to the house from the delivery hut, after being given ceremonial baths. On the 28th day, the maternal uncle of the child arrives to perform a simple ceremony of tying the waist thread (*noolkattu*). As it is celebrated on the 28th day, it is also called *irupathiettukattu*. When the child is three month old, it is taken to the temple of the family deity to be tonsured and also named after the resident deity.

Kanikaran girls have their ears pierced when they are five. An experienced elderly female pierces the ear of the girl with a citrus thorn and a small plug of wood is inserted through the hole. Sweets are then given the girl. The wood in the ear is changed periodically, bigger ones being inserted each time to make the hole wider.

A girl who attains puberty is led into a specially erected hut. She is given a series of ceremonial baths for seven days by her maternal uncle's daughter (*nathanar*). She is also given a rich diet consisting of rice flour, jaggery and eggs with gingelly oil. Pollution ends on the seventh day, when the maternal uncle gives her new clothes. This ceremony is called *thirattikalyanam* or *sadangukalyanam*.

The responsibility to negotiate and fix a marriage rests with the maternal uncle of the boy. With the help of the community heads, *muthukani* and *vizhikani*, he fixes the date and time of the marriage. Both families invite their guests by giving them betel leaves and arecanuts. At the wedding, all the invitees assemble in the marriage *pandal* (*kalyana kudi*) and then the *pilathi* (sacred specialist) starts worshipping the gods. This is followed by singing and *kuravayidal* by the married women. Next is a ceremony called *karuppatti soru* in which the married couple are supposed to eat sweetened cooked rice from the

same leaf. All the elders bless the couple (*polikoduthal*). The consummation ceremony is on the same night at the bride's residence.

Adultery is invariably the cause for divorce among them. Either spouse can initiate divorce proceedings, with the help of their parents. Other grounds for divorce are barrenness and impotency. Usually the husband gives back the wife's dowry on separation or divorce.

When death (*marichi*) occurs, new cloth is draped over the corpse after it is bathed. This is followed by *vaikkarisi poduthal* in which wet raw rice is put in the mouth of the corpse. The corpse is carried on a cot to the place selected for the burial. Usually, only persons over fifty years old are cremated; others are buried in a lying posture with the head towards the south. The eldest son or daughter of the deceased lights the pyre or conducts the burial. The pollution ends on the 16th day with a feast (*pulakuzhi*). They worship ancestors and offerings are made to them every year.

The Kanikaran were food gatherers and hunters. Their major economic resource now is land and the forest. They have become shifting or slash-and-burn cultivators. A few, however, are settled agriculturists. By the experience gained in living in the forest, they have developed techniques suited to a type of forest cultivation that will not harm forest resources. They usually grow tapioca and pepper. Now they also grow arecanuts, plantain and jack. They grow paddy which they sow in the cleared areas during the rainy season. Recently they have started growing chillies, betel leaf, turmeric and coffee.

They also collect minor forest produce like honey and *poocha* (nuts) and sell them in the market. They are also employed as labourers in the forest by the Government cooperatives. A few are in Government service. They barter their goods or sell them on cash. According to the 1981 census, 436 persons were cultivators, 441 persons were agricultural labourers and only 84 persons were in livestock, forestry, fishing, hunting and plantations, orchards and allied activities.

Each Kanikaran settlement is controlled by its headman, *muthukani*. He is assisted by the *vizhikani*. These two offices are hereditary. Generally, the *muthukani* maintains cohesion

and solidarity among the Kani members. The Kanikaran respect the *muthukani* and *vizhikani* and go by their decisions. The *muthukani* presides over tribal council meetings, at which all social problems are discussed and settled, and fixes the time for harvesting the crops, sowing the seeds, gathering forest produce, worshipping deities and celebrating festivals. If any Kanikaran violates traditional norms or disobeys the *muthukani* or *vizhikani*, he is fined by the tribal council. The fine is spent on the celebration of the annual festival of the local deities.

The Kanikaran followed tribal religion but now they believe in Hinduism. A few are Christians. The Hindus worship Brahma, Vishnu and Siva. They also worship deities such as Madan, Mantramoorthy, Kaduvamurthy, Sastha, Tambiran, Aravela, Ayyappan, Dakshiyamman, Mootharamman and Ayurvelli. They are particular in worshipping a nature god, Kannisavu. They have two kinds of worship, the *kodi* and the *padukkai*. The former is meant for superior and powerful deities such as the Tambiran. It is performed once a year on a grand scale for two days. The latter type of worship is celebrated on a simple scale by individuals.

Hindu Kanikarans celebrate festivals such as Onam, Deepavali and Karthigai. Their sacred specialist, *pilathi*, performs worship and rituals of birth, marriage and death. In addition, he also cures the sick and drives away evil spirits.

The Christian Kanikaran are converts to the Roman Catholic faith. They celebrate Christmas and Good Friday. Interdining between the Christians and the Hindus is not prohibited.

The Kanikaran live alongside other tribal communities such as the Kaniyan, Malai Vedan and Mala Kuravan and caste groups such as the Nadar, Mudaliar and Ezhava. They consider themselves superior to other tribal communities but inferior to the Nadar and other dominant caste groups. They accept water and food from the superior tribal and nontribal communities. They share water sources and cremation grounds with other castes. They maintain patron-client relationship with the Kaniyan and cultivator-labour relationship with the Nadar and Nair communities. They receive the services of the barber and washerman in urban areas.

Some Kanikaran now run petty business ventures. They trade

in fruits and general goods. There are also a few teachers and political activists among them. At the District level, they have their own association, called the Kanikkar Adivasigal Nalavurumai Sangam, in Kulasekharam, Kanniyakumari District.

Kanikaran children study upto secondary school level. Boys drop out from studies to help their families. They believe only in indigenous medicines. They do not favour family planning. Couples prefer to have four children or more. They have access to civic amenities.

JAKKA PARTHASARATHY

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KANIYAN

The Kaniyan are also referred to as Kanyan, Kerala Kanikaran and Kani. They do not have any titles, but a few male Kaniyan suffix 'Kani' to their names. Most Kaniyan are found in the Kanniyakumari District, but some are also distributed in Tirunelveli and Coimbatore Districts. The word Kaniyan has been derived from the word *kaniya* meaning 'foresight'. According to the local people, the Kaniyan are experts in astrology and palmistry, and practise fortune-telling by reading the face or hand of a client.

The Kaniyan believe that they were the original inhabitants of the Travancore region. In early writings there was confusion in identifying the tribe 'Kaniyan'. Subramanya Aiyar (1903) in his report on Travancore mentioned that several of them were to be found in the eastern taluks of Travancore. The Kanikkar are included but not Kaniyan. In the same report, he included Kaniyan in the Hindu list and quoted their population as 10,340. The Census of India, 1961 did not report the presence of Kaniyan in Kanniyakumari District but the Census of India, 1971 has reported it. The population of the Kaniyan community stated in the 1971 Census report was 239 persons. The 1981 Census has recorded 1038 persons as Kaniyan or Kanyan.

They live in the foothills of the mountains of the northeast part of the Kanniyakumari District adjacent to the towns of Nagercoil, Kuzhitturai and Padmanabhapuram. The Kaniyan speak Malayalam, within the family and with kin groups. They use the Malayalam script. With outsiders they speak Tamil and a few also know to write Tamil. At present, their children study in Tamil medium schools.

The Kaniyan, in the past, used to dress in colourful clothes and carried books, a needle and an image of Bhadrakali when they went out to foretell the future. They wear sacred ash on their foreheads and other parts of their bodies; they wear earrings and shell necklaces. Nowadays, however, Kaniyan men wear dhotis and full sleeve shirts when they go to town. The women wear a loose, long cloth wrapped around the waist and a blouse over which they drape a towel as an upper garment. The Kaniyan, are a Scheduled Tribe.

They are nonvegetarian but abstain from eating beef. Their staple foods are rice and millets. They consume pulses, vegetables and fruit. They use groundnut and coconut oils for cooking. They consume milk and milk products. They drink coffee and tea. Both men and women occasionally drink liquor.

The Kaniyan seem to have no subdivisions among them now, although there were said to be two exogamous subgroups namely Peringalathi and Vellanatti. Nowadays, the hierarchy within the community is largely based on economic and occupational status.

The Kaniyan are an endogamous group. They prefer consanguineous marriages but avoid marrying the sister's daughter. They prefer to marry father's sister's daughter and mother's brother's daughter. The mode of acquiring mates is by mutual consent or by negotiation. The age at marriage varies from 16 to 20 years for girls and 20 to 25 years for boys.

Monogamy is the marital norm among the Kaniyan, but polygyny (non-sororal) and junior sororate are permitted, in case the first wife is barren. A gold *thali* and toe-rings are the marriage symbols. Cash and clothes are given as dowry. The father of the bride has to give a minimum of Rs.500 and at least one pair of clothes to the bridegroom. In return, the bridegroom's father gives jewellery worth a sovereign of gold to the bride.

The Kaniyan live mostly in nuclear families. A joking relationship is permitted with sisters-in-law (wife's sisters) and brothers-in-law (wife's brothers) and also between grandparents and grandchildren. An avoidance relationship is observed between mothers-in-law and sons-in-law and between daughters-in-law and fathers-in-law.

In the past, the Kaniyan used to follow the system of matrilineal inheritance, but nowadays most Kaniyan follow the Hindu law of inheritance. Daughters can inherit the property when their parents have no sons. The eldest son succeeds as the head of the family after his father's death.

The women have a high status compared to their men. Though they do not have any right to ancestral property, they participate in all the social and religious activities along with

their menfolk. Adult females usually have a place in the mechanism of social control. Women do not contribute much to the family income. They control family expenditure.

The Kaniyan very strictly observe pre-delivery rituals and restrictions. The pregnant woman is taken to her natal home for her first delivery during the seventh month. Post-delivery pollution is observed. On the seventh day, the mother and child are given baths to terminate pollution. On the 28th day, the maternal uncle of the child arrives to ceremonially tie the waist thread (*karuppu noolu kattu*). They prepare sweets and a feast is given to the invited relatives. The naming of the child takes place on the 41st day. They tonsure their children at a nearby temple when they are three years old. Girls have their ears bored when they are five. They invite only a few close relatives for this occasion. Pubertal rites are observed for adolescent girls (*pushpavati*) on their attaining menarche. The girl is kept in seclusion, within the house, for seven days. She is given a rich diet consisting of rice flour, jaggery, eggs and leafy vegetables with gingelly oil. On the seventh day, they give her a bath and a Brahman priest conducts a purificatory ceremony. The maternal uncle of the girl gives her sweets and money. A feast is served to relatives.

Marital alliances are fixed by mutual negotiation. In the past, Kaniyan weddings were spread over three days. Now they take just a day. A Brahman priest officiates at the wedding. The main ritual is that of the bridegroom tying the *thali* around the bride's neck. The elders then bestow their blessings by throwing turmeric rice on the married couple. A vegetarian feast is given to all the invitees. The consummation ceremony takes place at the bride's home. They live in the patrilocal or neolocal residence after marriage.

Most of them cremate their dead; only a few bury them. When a person dies, the entire community turns out to help. The corpse is bathed in hot water and dressed in new clothes. This is followed by *vaikkarisi poduthal* in which wet raw rice is put in the mouth of the corpse. The corpse is then put on a bier and carried to the cremation ground. The eldest son lights the pyre. Then he goes around the corpse three times, with a pot of water on his head. On completion of the third

KANNADA SAINEEGAR

The Kannada Saineegar are also known as the Kannadiyar, Seniar, Saineegar and Kannada Veera Saiva Saineegar. Saineegar literally means 'soldiers' or 'warriors'. Chetty or Chettiar is their title. The community migrated to its present habitat from the Mysore area during the reign of Ballala Raja of the Hoysala dynasty. Their migration is recalled in their oral tradition. They are found in Madras, Chengai-MGR, North Arcot Ambedkar, Pudukkottai, Salem, Periyar, Thanjavur, Tiruchchirappalli and South Arcot Districts.

They speak Kannada among themselves and with their kin groups. Tamil is spoken with outsiders. They use the Kannada script within the family and the Tamil script, with others. Some are conversant with Telugu. The double-headed Ganda Berunda Pakshi (eagle) with four elephants is their emblem.

The Kannada Saineegar are nonvegetarian. Rice is their staple food. Some of them eat *ragi*, millets and wheat. They eat all varieties of pulses, vegetables, roots and tubers, and fruit. They use either groundnut oil or gingelly oil for cooking. They consume milk and milk products. Men drink liquor occasionally. Men smoke either *beedis* or cigarettes. Some of them inhale snuff.

The Kannada Saineegar community has social divisions at *kula* and *gotra* levels. There are 25 *kulas* with their respective *gotras*. Devatar, Samalai, Tiripundarkar, Kambalar, Poligare, Vastralu, Pandarigar and Pancharatra are some of the *kulas*. The *kula* indicates descent and lineage. They have *rishi gotras* such as Kashyapa, Atreya, Srivatsa, Bharadwaja, Mallikarjuna and Kaundinya. The different *kulas* have different *gotras*. Their function is to regulate marital alliances. They are aware of the *varna* system and consider themselves Sudras.

They follow endogamy at the community level and exogamy at the *gotra* level. *Sa-gotra* (same *gotra*) marriage is prohibited. They marry their father's sister's daughter, mother's brother's daughter or sister's daughter. The age at marriage is 18 for girls and 25 for boys. Marriage by negotiation by elders is the general mode of acquiring a mate. Monogamy is the marital norm. The *thali* and toe-rings are the symbols of marriage for

women. Paying *teravu* (bride-price) has now been replaced by dowry, which is given in both cash and kind. They follow the rule of patrilocal residence after marriage. Divorce with judicial approval is permitted on grounds of maladjustment or cruelty. Divorce compensation is given to the aggrieved party in terms of the judicial sanction. Children are the responsibility of both parents. Male divorcees and widowers are allowed to remarry, but not female divorcees or widows. Sororate is allowed if the first wife is barren, and with her consent.

Both nuclear and extended families exist in the Kannada Saineegar community. They do not observe any type of avoidance relationships. A joking relationship is allowed with younger brothers-in-law, sisters-in-law, cross-cousins and grandparents. They follow the male equigeniture rule of inheritance. All the sons share the ancestral property equally. The eldest son succeeds as the head of the family. Nuclear families are on the rise due to the breaking down of the extended family. Every Kannada Saineegar family in a locality is expected to attend community celebrations — failure to attend attracts a fine. The collected fines are utilised for religious purposes. They cooperate in celebrating the caste deity festivals.

The daughters have no right to claim a share in the ancestral property, but have the right to claim their mother's ornaments. They participate in social and religious activities. They have decision-making powers. They participate in all weaving operations. Some of them run power looms. Others are employed in spinning and textile mills. They earn and contribute to family income and control family expenditure.

The Kannada Saineegar observe *seemantha*, the pre-delivery ritual, in the fifth or seventh month of a woman's first pregnancy. Post-delivery pollution is observed for eight days. On the ninth day, purificatory baths are given to both the mother and child. On the same day, they also name the child, usually after a deity or an ancestor. The child's horoscope is also cast. Children are tonsured in their first, third or fifth year at the family or caste deity's shrine. Some Kannada Saineegar wear the *linga* and have taken *deeksha* from their gurus, or from their affiliated *peetham*. They observe puberty rites (*pupuneeratucerai*) for girls. The girl is kept secluded for six days after attaining

menarche. She wears a yellow sari during this period. She is given a purificatory bath on the seventh day, after which she is taken to the community hall for the *nalungu* rituals. All married women and children attend the function and the accompanying feast.

Kannada Saineegar weddings take place at the bridegroom's residence or at the community hall or at a *kalyanamandapam*. Marriage celebrations last for two days. A Brahman priest officiates at the wedding. Prior to the wedding day, the bridegroom undergoes the *upanayanam* or thread-wearing ceremony. They observe the *nishithartha* (betrothal), *kankanadharana*, *mangalasnana* (ceremonial bath), *kanyadana* (offering of the hands of the bride and to the bridegroom by her father), *devarapuja*, *muhurtha* and *saptapadi* ceremonies. The *gruhapravesha* ceremony takes place on the same day. The marriage feast is given by the bridegroom's parents. The wedding expenses are borne by both families. The consummation ceremony takes place at the bridegroom's residence on any auspicious day.

They bury their dead, either in a sitting posture or in a supine position. They observe initial rites on the third day and the final rites on the 11th day. Death pollution is observed for ten days by the kin of the deceased. A Veera Saiva Pandaram or a Brahman priest officiates at the death rites. They observe *shradha* ceremonies and worship their ancestors annually on Mahalaya Amavasya day in the Tamil month of *Purattasi*.

Their traditional occupations were weaving, cultivation, animal husbandry and military service. Agriculture, weaving, trading in textiles, employment in Government and private mills and self-employment are their primary occupations now. Some of them work as daily wage labourers in business establishments. The master weavers are engaged in the textile and cotton thread trade. They operate both handlooms and powerlooms and manufacture a variety of silk and cotton threads. Some of them work in the co-operative societies as salesmen. Women and children are now engaged in weaving operations. They maintain market links through middle men such as master weavers and brokers. Some weavers sell their products through weavers' cooperative societies. Some of them own land. They

employ farm labourers from other communities to look after their cultivation or lease (*gutte*) the land to other communities. In return they get a fixed quantum of paddy per year or an equivalent sum of cash.

The traditional caste councils headed by *pattagarar*, assisted by *chettigara, peddaru* and *sesharaju*, existed till recent times and settled disputes. In some places, *nattamkar, nattamani* and *govalar* used to deal with the Kannada Saineegar community problems. Nowadays, community associations at the regional level have replaced the caste councils. Office bearers of the caste associations are elected through secret ballot. They have weaver's associations and weaver's cooperative societies at district and regional levels. In addition, they have a State-level Kannada Saineegar Association. All these associations plan and implement welfare and development activities. They have built their own temples, *kalyanamandapams* and community halls. They finance weavers on nominal interest and extend loans for buying power looms. They invite gurus to impart religious knowledge and to give *diksha*. They raise funds through contributions from members for welfare activities.

The Kannada Saineegar are mostly Saivites and follow the Veera Saiva philosophy advocated by Sri Basaveswara. Someswara is their caste deity. Veerabhadra, Andavar, Madurai Veeran, Karuppannaswamy, Ekambaraswamy and Markandaiyar are their family deities. They have clan and village deities such as Ayyanar, Mariamma, Kanniammal and Muneeswara. Murugan, Madurai Veeran, Kamakshi, Meenakshi, Chamundeswari, Nanjundeswara, Balasubramanya and Mallikarjuna are their regional deities. They go on pilgrimages to Madurai, Mysore, Nanjangud, Tiruvannamalai, Palani, Kanchipuram, Rameswaram and Tiruchendur. They celebrate Sivaratri, Ugadi, Pongal, Basavajayanthi, Dussehra and Gouri-Ganesha. They also observe village and regional deity festivals. The Brahman, the Jangam and the Veera Saiva Pandaram are their sacred specialists.

They are experts in silk and cotton weaving. There are a few designers (embroidery) and silver and gold thread artists. They prepare chemical dyes for printing on cloth. Folk songs are sung by women during marriage, birth and other ceremonial functions. They use percussion musical instruments and recite *bhajans* (prayer songs).

The Kannada Saineegar maintain traditional intercommunity relations in their social, ritual and occupational activities. They accept water and food from the high castes such as the Brahman, Lingayat, Veera Saiva Pandaram and Jangam. Nowadays they also accept water and food from the other weaving communities, such as the Devanga, Padmasali and Kaikolan. They share water sources and cremation grounds with high caste Hindus. They receive the services of barber, washerman and other artisan communities. They maintain patron-client, landlord-tenant, cultivator-labour, master weaver-tenant weaver, and employer-employee relationship with other communities. The community has entrepreneurs, businessmen, teachers, administrators, engineers, doctors and political leaders at the village panchayat and municipality levels.

They are educating thier children. Some of them have studied upto postgraduate level. Those who drop out of school do so due to poverty. They favour modern medicare and family planning. They have access to all civic amenities. They have got loans to start small scale industries and to purchase power looms. They are dependent on moneylenders and master weavers for credit.

SHAIK YASEEN SAHEB

KANNADIGA

The Kannadiga constitute the second largest immigrant group in Tamil Nadu, the first being the Telugu speakers. There are 2,47,163 Kannadiga households (rural-1,67,989 and urban-79,174) in Tamil Nadu with a total Kannada-speaking population of 11,49,893 (rural-7,73,975 and urban-3,75,918) according to the Census of India, 1981.

In general, the Kannadiga in Tamil Nadu include the Kannada-, Tulu-, Konkani- and Kodava(or Kodagu)-speaking population, who migrated from the present Karnataka, either recently or in the historical past, to the Tamil-speaking regions. In the border areas of Karnataka, particularly in the rural areas of the Nilgiris, Coimbatore, Periyar, Dharmapuri and Salem Districts, the Kannadiga live in large numbers, mostly as peasants. In many of the towns and cities of Tamil Nadu, the vegetarian hotels ('Udipi hotels') are run by the Brahman from Karnataka who are relatively recent emigrants from Dakshin Kannad Districts of Karnataka. There are also a sizeable number of Government and private service personnel, traders, agricultural and plantation (coffee and tea) labourers and daily wage labourers among the Kannadiga in Tamil Nadu.

The migration of the Kannadiga to Tamil-speaking regions in historical times dates back to when, according to their oral tradition, their forefathers served in the armies of Hyder Ali (1721-1782) and Tippu Sultan (1750-1799) of Mysore. When these kings captured northwestern parts of the present day Tamil Nadu, many troops, along with a large number of Kannada-speaking people, settled in these areas. The term Naick, meaning 'chieftain of the troops', is Naicker in Tamil and is used as a suffix to their names by the Kannadiga who claim to be descendants of the warrior class.

The Dasa Palanjika have a different folk history, according to which, the Kannadiga fled from the erstwhile Mysore kingdom to escape the atrocities of Hyder Ali and Tippu Sultan. They were afraid of being forcefully converted to Islam and wished to protect their women's chastity from the invading soldiers. They claim that their original habitat was Mysore,

Chamaraja Nagar, Gundlepet, Hunsur and other areas of the present Karnataka.

The Kannada Saineegar claim that they had migrated from the Mysore country during the reign of Ballala Raja of the Hoysala dynasty. They migrated along with the forces of Ballala Raja during his southern invasion.

The Kempatti refer to Harihara Raya and Bukka Raya, the founders of the Vijayanagar empire. They claim that their ancestors were soldiers and home guards in the Vijayanagar regime and that they migrated to their present habitat after the fall of Vijayanagar.

The Morasu Vokkaligar claim to have migrated from Morasu Nadu, to the east of the erstwhile Mysore kingdom, and spread up to the present Kanchipuram in the east and the Tungabhadra river in the north.

Almost all the Kannadiga in Tamil Nadu read and write Tamil. They speak their own language Kannada, Tulu, Konkani or Kodagu within their kin group. Most Kannadigas living in Tamil Nadu seem to be Hindus, but there are a few Christians and Muslims.

There are Scheduled Castes such as the Adi Karnataka and the Holeya among the Kannadiga. They are mainly involved in agricultural labour. Scavenging and pig-rearing are pursued, in addition, by the Holeya.

The Scheduled Tribes, such as the Kuruman, Kurumba, Sholaga and Uraly, who speak dialects of their own, live mainly in the border areas of Karnataka and Tamil Nadu. Among the Kannadiga Brahman living in Tamil Nadu, the most prominent are the Shivalli Brahman, the Gowda Saraswat Brahman, the Kota Brahman, the Madhwa Brahman and the Havyak Brahman. Most of them run 'hotels' and claim to have settled in Tamil Nadu (in major cities and towns) in recent times, *i.e.* from the 1940s. There are medical practitioners, small-entrepreneurs, Government and private service personnel as well among them. The Shivalli Brahman mostly identify with the title Achar; the Kota Brahman suffix Rao with their names and the Havyak Brahman have titles such as Hegde and Bhat.

Among the non-Brahman Kannadigas who can also be generally classified as other Backward Communities, the

Kappiliar, Kunchigar, Morasu Vokkaligar, Thorayar, Gangadi Vokkaligar and Gudi Vokkaligar suffix the title Gowder or Gowda to their names; the Dasa Palanjika, Kannada Saineegar, Devanga and Moundadan Chetty claim the title Chetty; the Kannadiga Naicker have both Naicker and Chetty titles; the Kempatti have Gowder and Urs as their titles; the Bunt have the title Setty or Shetty; the Hegde, a small shepherd community living in the border areas of Karnataka, use the title Hegde; the Siviar, a small community of inland-fishermen, and the Kodava, recent emigrants from the Kodagu District of Karnataka, do not use any titles. There are also Jains from Karnataka.

Those communities that use the titles Gowder or Gowda are generally involved in agriculture, animal husbandry and trade. The Kannadiga living in the hilly regions in the northwestern parts of Tamil Nadu practise horticulture and sericulture. The Uppara, who use the titles Naicker and Chettiar, are mainly wage-labourers, well- and tank-diggers, masons and quarry-workers. The Siviar, also known as Bestha or Bestavar, are involved in inland fishing and almost all the tanks in and around Coimbatore city are taken on lease by them for fishing. They also work as wage labourers. Except the Kannada Saineegar, who are predominantly weavers or employed in textile mills, all the other communities who use the title Chettiar or Chetty do trade and business. The Bunts (Shetty or Setty) are either bank employees or entrepreneurs.

Most Kannadigas who had settled in Tamil Nadu during historical times no longer consider themselves immigrants. For example, the Kannadiga living in the districts of the Nilgiris, Periyar, Coimbatore, Salem and Dharmapuri, bordering Karnataka State, maintain marital alliances usually within their own community living in the same areas in Tamil Nadu, whereas the recent immigrants, particularly the Kannadiga Brahman and to some extent the Lingayat and the Bunt, generally choose alliances from their own community in Karnataka.

The historical immigrants are almost localised in their lifestyle and celebrate all Tamil festivals and visit religious places within Tamil Nadu. But recent immigrants, who are mainly settled in major cities and towns, still have links in Karnataka and

The Kannadiya Naicker strictly conform to the rule of clan exogamy in marital alliances. Monogamy is the marital norm. Girls are usually married around the age of 18-22 years and boys around 20-25. The Kannadiya Naciker are liberal in allowing their sons and daughters to choose their own spouses, provided they stick to the norms of marrying within their community and observing clan exogamy. Consanguineal marriages are common. Mother's brother's daughter, father's sister's daughter and elder sister's daughter are the preferred spouses.

The *thali* and metti are the marriage symbols for women. The *thali* has a small semi-spherical pendant called *kuzhi pottu.* Neither bride-price nor dowry is paid. However, the bridegroom's family demands for gold ornaments and household utensils from the bride's family before fixing the marriage. The rule of residence after marriage is usually patrilocal. They are opposed to the idea of divorce. Men are allowed to remarry but not women.

Most Kannadiya Naicker families living in Anaimalai and Narayanachettipalayam are mixed extended families. A joking relationship exists between grandparents and grandchildren. An avoidance relationship exists between father-in-law and daughter-in-law.

Inheritance of property is through the male line. Male members in a family have the responsibility of arranging the marriages of their sister(s). A married woman is not given any share in the property of her parents.

The women are now educated especially in urban centres. Rural women, however, still do not go beyond primary level of education. The traditional division of labour between men and women — women attending to the house and men earning a livelihood — still persists.

They celebrate the *valaikappu* ritual when a woman is seven months pregnant. The woman is adorned with bangles, and a feast is served to invitees. After the ceremony, the pregnant woman goes to her natal home with her parents. Childbirth entails pollution for seven days, being terminated with the mother and the child being given purificatory baths on the seventh day. On the same day, or on a more convenient day,

the naming ceremony is performed. On this day, the maternal uncle of the child brings it new clothes and *sakkarai pongal* (a sweet dish made with cooked rice and jaggery) in a silver plate after offering them to Lord Vinayakar at the temple. A family elder names the child. Girls have their ears pierced (*kadhu kutharathu*) before they are seven. The maternal uncle gifts the girl with a *thalukku* (ear ornament) and new clothes.

On attaining puberty the girl is secluded for 16 days. Pollution ends on the 16th day with the *pooru nanneerattuthal vizha*. On this day, the girl is purified by ablution with consecrated water. The maternal uncle of the girl presents *seer* on the occasion — a sari (or half-sari) and blouse and cosmetics. A feast is served.

When a marriage is negotiated, the boy and his parents go to see the girl first. The horoscopes of the boy and the girl are compared and, if they match, the date of the marriage is fixed. Ten days before the wedding day, a ceremony called *uppu matharathu* (exchange of salt) is performed in the temple of Lord Vinayakar. Both the bride's and bridegroom's families go to the market together and buy two new baskets of salt. After offering the salt to Lord Vinayakar in the temple, they exchange the baskets of salt. This is considered the first stage of the wedding. On the same day, both parties purchase clothes for the bride and the bridegroom and place orders for making the *kuzhi pottu*. The bridegroom's family pay for the *kuzhi pottu*. Four or five days before the wedding day, a *pandal* is erected in the house of the bride. This is known as *muhurtha kal podurathu*.

They conduct *nichayathamboolam* (betrothal) on an evening prior to the wedding. On that evening, both the bride and the bridegroom undergo the *nalungu* ceremonies. Married women apply sandal paste on the cheeks, oil on the head and *kumkum* on the forehead of the bride and the bridegroom after which they take bath. After the *nalungu*, a ceremony called *madi niraikkirathu* is performed. The bridegroom's family gives a new sari to the bride to wear. When the bride comes in, wearing the sari, the bridegroom's mother and his elder brother's wife give her a coconut, bananas, *kumkum* and turmeric; the bride receives them in the loose end of her sari.

The maternal uncles of both the bride and the bridegroom present them with new clothes and gold ornaments at the time of *nichayathamboolam*.

On the day of the marriage, the bridegroom's family gives the bride a new silk sari and blouse. The marriage ceremonies are performed by a Brahman priest. Many auspicious things, such as lighted wick lamps, trays of flowers, fruits, sandal paste and vermilion powder, coconut and *arasani* (coloured new pots) are placed on the marriage dais. The wedding concludes with the bridegroom tying the *thali* around the neck of the bride, tying three knots assisted by his sister. After this ceremony, a grand vegetarian feast is served.

The Kannadiya Naicker cremate their dead. If the deceased is unmarried, the corpse is kept outside the house and turmeric water is sprinkled on it. If the deceased is a married adult, *dhayadhis* (kinfolk) of the person bring a new cloth (*kodi*) to cover the corpse. Before cremation, the corpse is washed and clad in the new cloth, then carried on a decorated bier to the cremation ground. When being taken to the cremation ground, the corpse faces homeward upto a point called *padai thiruppu moolai;* thereafter, it faces the cremation ground. The chief mourner who carries the fire-pot has his head shaven. After the cremation, the chief mourner breaks the fire-pot near the cremation spot. The expenditure of cremation and conducting the connected rituals is incurred by the daughters of the deceased. On the third day, the affinal relatives of the chief mourner apply buttermilk on the backs of his hands. This is known as *moru thadavarathu* (applying buttermilk); this ceremony is conducted in the house of the chief mourner. On the same day, the barber of the village collects the bones and ashes and puts them in a new mud pot at the cremation ground. On the 11th day, the chief mourner disposes of the ashes and bones in a river. A Brahman performs the puja in front of the *homam* (sacred fire) and this is performed in the house of the deceased. With that the mourning period ends. After this, all the relatives bathe and go to the Perumal temple. In the Perumal temple, the Brahman conducts a ceremony called *vennai erithal* (throwing of butter), said to help the deceased to enter heaven.

The primary occupation of the Kannadiya Naicker in

ture. Some are well educated and are employed in Government service as clerks, teachers and technicians; others are merchants and shopkeepers.

Those living in Anaimalai, Oothukkuli and Narayanachettipalayam do not have any formal caste associations. They come under the jurisdiction of the village panchayat. Familial disputes are settled by their own elders. Intercaste disputes which arise within the village are settled by the panchayat president.

The Kannadiya Naicker are Vaishnavites and most of them worship Perumal. The Perumal and Vinayakar temples in their villages are maintained well and regular pujas are conducted in them. Their clan gods, Thottakka Rangamma and Veeramastisami, are worshipped at home. Some of them visit Tirupati once a year to worship Lord Venkateswara. Almost all Hindu festivals are celebrated by them.

In the Tamil month of *Adi*, grand celebrations are arranged at the Perumal temple by the Kannadiya Naicker of Anaimalai. Street plays and dramas depicting episodes from the *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata* are arranged. In the Tamil month of *Margazhi* (December-January), they get up early in the morning, sing *suprabhatham* (songs to awaken the deity) and go to the temple.

The Kannadiya Naicker feel that all other non-Brahman caste groups, except Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes, are equal to them socially. They do not eat and drink water in the houses of the lowly placed communities and they are not entertained in their houses. There are separate wells, temples and burial grounds for them in their villages.

They educate their children at least up to primary level. Their villages are electrified and provided with drinking water facilities. They make use of modern medicare and get treated at hospitals. They have access to urban amenities.

K. RAVI

KAPPILIAR

The Kappiliar are one of a cattle herding communities of Tamil Nadu. The community is also known as Kappilian, Koppiliar, Vokkaliga Kappiliar, Kappilia Gouder, Kappilia Koudar, Vokkaliga Gowda and Okkaliga Kounder. The community has titles, *viz.* Gowda, Gowder, Gounder and Kounder. The literal meaning of the term *kappulian* or *kappiliar* is 'herdsman'. The term *kappulian* is derived from *kappu*, which means 'to protect' or 'guard'. Further, the term *kappu* indicates that they are an agricultural or shepherd community. The Kappiliar are also called the Karumpurathal.

The Kappiliar say that seven to nine generations ago, they migrated to their present habitat from Mysore because they were oppressed by the Nawabs of Mysore. Thurston (1909) states that "some Kappiliyans say that they came south six or seven generations ago, along with the Urumikkaarans, from the banks of the Thungabhadra river, because the Tottiyans tried to ravish their women. According to another tradition, the caste was oppressed by the Musalmans of the north, fled across the Thungabhadra, and was saved by two Pongu (Pongamiaglabra) trees bridging an unfordable stream, which blocked their escape. They travelled, says the legend, through Mysore to Conjeeveram, thence to Coimbatore, and thence to the Madurai District. The stay at Conjeevaram is always emphasised and is supported by the fact that the caste has a shrine dedicated to Kanchi Varadaraja Perumal". The Kappiliar community is now distributed in the three districts, *viz.* Coimbatore, Madurai and Anna.

They speak Kannada at home and Tamil with others. The literates of the community read and write Tamil.

They are nonvegetarian, but do not eat beef or pork. They consume all varieties of vegetables, pulses, roots and tubers, and fruit. Their staple food is rice, supplemented by *ragi*, millets and wheat. They use groundnut oil for cooking. They drink coffee and tea. A few men drink liquor occasionally. Milk and milk products are consumed by them. Some men smoke *beedis* and cigarettes. Both men and women chew betel. Some of them inhale snuff.

The Kappiliar community is divided into two major subdivisions, *viz.* Dharmakattu and Munukattu. Each subdivision is an endogamous group. The Dharmakattu is the larger group. The Dharmakattu is further subdivided into four groups, *viz.* Munuvalavikkaran (bracelet people), Bottukattoru (*thali*-tying people), Okkaliga (cultivators), and Murubalayanoru (three-bangle people). Each endogamous division is in turn divided into a number of *kulams* (exogamous units), such as the Dasari, Emmedar, Soundri, Eandar, Mulibadavanar, Basaliyar, Serar, Avunar, Avular, Ondiyar, Karavanar and Labbedar. There is no social status differences between the divisions as well as the *kulams*. The differences are seen only in the observance of marriage symbols. The Munuvalavikkaran use a bracelet as a marriage symbol instead of the *thali*. While the Munubalayanoru women wear only three bangles as a marriage symbol. These divisions and *kulams* regulate marriage alliances. The Munukattu subdivision has considerably lost its identity in the community.

Both nuclear and vertically extended families are found among the Kappiliar, although the former dominates. The community does not have any traditional avoidance or joking relationships. Succession is by the eldest son.

The women have a significant role in agricultural operations, animal husbandry, collecting fuel and in marketing milk, butter and ghee. Some women work in government service. They participate in social and religious functions. Women do not have decision-making powers. They contribute to the family income, but do not control the family expenditure.

The Kappiliar observe the pre-delivery ritual *valaikappu* in the fifth month of a woman's first pregnancy. The woman's parents give her a new sari and bangles. Sweets are distributed to relatives and friends. During the seventh or ninth month of her pregnancy the woman is taken to her natal home for the delivery. Post-natal pollution is observed for three days. On the third day, a ceremonial bath is given to the mother and the child to mark the end of the pollution period. The local *dai* (midwife) gives the ritual bath to the mother and the child. She is paid in cash and kind. For the first two days after delivery, the new mother is not permitted to take any diet except milk and water. The mother also takes a herbal medicine

for about 15 days to one month after delivery. They do not observe any naming ceremony, but the child is named before it is one.

The children are tonsured when they are one or three years old. They also pierce their ears on the same occasion. Puberty rites are observed when a girl attains menarche. The girl remains polluted for 13 days and is isolated in a corner of the house or in the village public place (*mandai*). If she remains within the house, her maternal uncle makes a screen for her; if outside, a temporary hut is built. On the 13th day, the girl is given a bath in a tank and, as she re-enters the house, steps over a pestle. Near the entrance, some food is placed for a dog. While it eats the food, it is given a severe beating. The howling of the beaten dog is said to be an auspicious omen, portending a large family for the girl. If the dog does not howl, it is said that the girl will bear no children. A cotton thread, dyed with turmeric, is tied around her neck by a married woman. The puberty pollution period has nowadays been reduced to nine or eleven days. The isolation hut too is built in the front or back of the house.

The Kappiliar community strictly observes the rule of endogamy and exogamy at *kulam* level. They practise cross-cousin marriages (father's sister's daughter and mother's brother's daughter) as well as maternal uncle-niece marriages. Generally, boys get married around 21 and girls after puberty or around 18. Mates are acquired only through negotiations. The marital norm is generally monogamy. Both types of polygamy (sororal and non-sororal) are practised in some exceptional cases. Bride-price is paid.

They practise only adult marriages. The weddings are conducted at the bride's house. Nowadays it is arranged at *kalyanamandapams* also. The Kappiliar marriage is solemnised simply by the couple exchanging garlands. However, the Bottukattoru subgroup tie the *thali* while the Munuvalavikkaran subgroup wear a bracelet as a marriage symbol. The Okkaliga subgroup wear a black bead necklace as a marriage symbol. Toe-rings are a common marriage symbol for all the four divisions. The marriage feast is given by the bride's parents. The consummation ceremony takes place at the bridegroom's residence.

On the evening of the wedding, the couple go to the houses of their maternal uncles. There the *nalungu* ceremony is performed, and the uncles put rings on the toes of the couple. On the following day, the bride-price is paid, and betel is distributed to the invited villagers in the presence of a Kummara, Urumikkaran and washerman. On the third day, the bridegroom goes in procession to the house of the bride and their fingers are linked together by the maternal uncle or uncles. For this reason, the ceremony is called *kai keedu kahodina*, "hand-locking day".

The Kappiliar cremate their dead. However, children and those who have died in an epidemic or of chronic disease are buried. Death pollution is observed for three days. On the third, 12th or 16th day, all relatives take a bath to avoid pollution. This is called *dukhasanthi*. They collect the bones and ashes of the deceased and dispose of them in sacred rivers. After one year they conduct *thivasam* (annual ceremony) in memory of the deceased.

The funeral ceremonies of the Kappiliar are carried out very much on the lines of those of the Tottiyan, according to Thurston (1909). Fire is carried to the burning ground by a Chakkiliyan. On the last day of the death ceremonies (*karumandiram*) cooked food, particular fruits (*Xanthocarpum*) and leaves (*Lecucas aspera*) are placed on a tray and is taken to a stream, on the bank of which an effigy is made, to which the various articles are offered. A small quantity is placed on leaves to be eaten by crows. On the return journey to the house, three men, the brother-in-law or father-in-law of the deceased and two agnates stand in a row at a certain spot. A cloth is stretched before them as a screen, over which they place their right hands which are touched three times by a washerman with *cyndon* leaves dipped in milk, cow's urine and turmeric water. The washerman then washes the hands with water. All the agnates place new turbans on their heads and go back in procession accompanied by a Urmikkaran and washerman. The Kappiliar still observe these death rites.

The Kappiliar depend on land for their economy. It is controlled by individual proprietorship. Their primary occupation is cultivation. Some of them work as agricultural labour.

Their subsidary occupation is animal husbandry. Nowadays some of them are in business and trade. Some also work in government as well as in private organisations. The community has direct links with the market.

They have a traditional caste council (*jati panchayat*), which is headed by a *jati talaivar* (headman). Each village has an *oor talaivar* (village headman). While conducting the proceedings of the caste council, the *talaivar* sits on an black blanket *kambalam*. The council settles disputes and imposes fines. The *jati talaivar* and *oor talaivar* are hereditary offices. Assisting the *talaivars* are other office-bearers such as *upa talaivar* (vice-president), *seyalalar* (secretary) and treasurers.

The Kappiliar are Hindus. The community has family deities, clan deities, village deities and regional deities. Each *kulam* in the community is associated with a deity, such as Jakkamma, Kanayammar, Madoor, Battayamman and Bommaiswamy. Their regional deity is Nandagopalswamy at Cumbam. The Kappiliar's major sacred centres are Cumbam Venugopalaswamy and Veerachikkamma Kovil. However, they also visit other sacred places, such as Palani, Madurai, Rameswaram, Tiruchendur and Tirupati. The Brahman priests are invited only for conducting death rites; all other rites are performed by sacred specialists from their own community. The Kappiliar celebrate all Hindu festivals. They conduct a two-day festival in the month of *Thai* (January-February) at their temple in Cumbam.

They accept water, cooked and uncooked food from all communities, except the service castes such as the Vannan and Ambattan. They share water sources with other communities. They have a separate cremation ground. They receive the services of the Vannan, Ambattan, Kummara and Urumikkaran castes. They maintain landlord-tenant and cultivator-labour relationships with other communities. The Kappiliar have businessmen, white-collar job-holders, teachers, engineers, doctors, lawyers, defence personnel and village and State level political leadrs.

The children are educated upto the secondary school level. Some go to college and have done post-graduation also and some have studied professional courses. The Kappiliar use both traditional and modern medicare and favours family planning.

They have access to all civic amenities and development programmes.

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KARAIYALAN

The Karaiyalan are one of the fishing communities of Tamil Nadu, inhabiting the coastal areas of Ramanathapuram District. It has been reported that some of them have migrated to Sri Lanka also. They are locally known as Karaiyan and Neer Vellalan. The other fishing communities living in Ramanathapuram District are the Parvan, Kadaiyan and Valaiyan. Their mother tongue is Tamil. They do not have any separate identification marks. Both men and women dress like other communities in the area. In the past, women had enlarged holes in their ear-lobes from which dangled ear-ornaments called *pambadam*. But now they wear ear-studs (*kammal*) only and do not enlarge the holes any further. They live in thatched houses, and enough space is provided in front of the house to dry their nets and to repair them. They do not have surnames. In the social hierarchy they claim superiority over the other middle-ranked communities such as the Nadar and Thevar.

The Karaiyalan are nonvegetarian but do not eat pork or beef. They eat a lot of fish being fisher folk. Their staple foodgrains are rice and *ragi*. They eat all locally available vegetables, pulses, roots, tubers and fruits. They do not consume milk or milk products, preferring coffee or tea. They use groundnut oil or gingelly oil for cooking. Most men drink liquor occasionally. Many smoke *beedis* or cigarettes. Some of them chew betel-leaf with or without tobacco and a few of them inhale snuff.

The Karaiyalan are an endogamous group which does not have subgroups. Both nuclear and joint families exist in the community. The married sons live with their parents for some years and then set up separate households. In such cases, a small piece of land is given to each to construct a new house. But property is divided among the sons only after they are all married. The sons look after their parents in their old age.

The Karaiyalan marriages are arranged by parents through negotiation. They do not intermarry with other fishing communities such as the Paravan, Valaiyan and Kadaiyan. Consan-

guineous marriages are prevalent. Generally boys are married at the age of 21-25 years, while the girls get married at 16-20. Monogamy is the marital norm. Dowry is paid. The *thali* is the marriage symbol for women. The wedding takes place at the bride's house and is arranged in a *pandal*. A Brahman priest is invited to conduct the wedding. They follow the patrilocal rule of residence. Only sons inherit the father's property. Divorce is allowed. In such cases the sons live with the father, daughters with the mother. No compensation is paid to the wife. Widow remarriages are permitted. Both sororate and levirate marriages have existed in the community.

Women are respected and are consulted in every family matter. They have the right to initiate divorce on grounds of ill-treatment. They are mainly confined to household jobs. Women do not observe avoidance relationships. They have a joking relationship with their brothers-in-law and sisters-in-law.

The pregnant Karaiyalan woman goes to her parents' home for her first delivery. The childbirth is attended on by an elderly woman from their community. The infant's first food is *cenai* (palm-jaggery water). Birth pollution is observed for 16 days and during this period the washerwoman washes the soiled clothes of the mother. She gets some money, a small amount of rice and vegetables for her services. On the 16th day, the house is cleaned and both the mother and the child are given purificatory baths. A Brahman priest conducts a purificatory ceremony. The child is named on this day, usually after a deity. Mother and child return home after three months when a feast is served to relatives. Children are tonsured within the first year at the family deity's temple. The child's ears also pierced then. The maternal uncle presents ear-studs to the child.

On attaining puberty, the Karaiyalan girl is kept secluded for 16 days. An iron implement is kept in her hand to protect against evil spirits. She is given ceremonial baths on the third, seventh and eleventh days. She is given eggs, oil and sugar to eat. The puberty ceremony is arranged on the 16th day. The maternal uncle gives a sari to the girl. She is garlanded and blessed by the elders. All relatives are given a feast and they in turn give the girl gifts in cash and kind.

A Karaiyalan marriage alliance is initiated by the parents of the boy. The horoscopes of the boy and the girl are studied and, if they match, the betrothal takes place at the girl's house. The boy's family visits the girl's house with the betrothal sari, blouse, flowers, and fruit. They demand the dowry at the time of the betrothal. The maternal uncles of the boy and the girl exchange the plate containing the betrothal sari, coconut, betel-leaf, arecanut and turmeric to confirm the marriage. The girl's father arranges a small feast. The marriage sari and the *thali* are purchased by the bridegroom's father. The maternal uncles, sisters and sister's husbands are given new clothes during the wedding. The main ritual of the wedding is the tying of the *thali* by the bridegroom around the bride's neck. After the tying of the *thali* the bridal couple exchange garlands and are blessed by the elders. Then they are taken into the house and are served milk and bananas. All the relatives are given a feast. They in turn give cash gifts to the couple. The consummation ceremony takes place at the bridegroom's house.

The Karaiyalan observe death pollution for 16 days. The corpse is bathed immediately and is kept in a lying position in the house. A light is placed behind the head of the corpse. A 25 paise coin is placed on its forehead. A small temporary *pandal* is made in front of the house. The Parayan makes the bier. After the deceased is placed on the bier, the women offer *vaikkarisi* (rice) to the corpse and the eldest daughter performs the *kolli* ceremony at the house by breaking an earthen pot if the deceased does not have any male issue. The washerman collects the *vaikkarisi* and the small change put with the rice. Then the body is carried to the burial ground. The barber blows the conch-shell in the procession. The corpse is cremated if he or she is the first issue; others are buried. The Parayan conducts the cremation or digs the grave. While being buried, the head of the corpse is placed towards the south. The eldest son performs the *kolli* by breaking the earthen pot at the burial ground. The next day they offer milk to the deceased at the burial ground. On the third day, the mourners have oil baths and a nonvegetarain meal is served to all relatives. On the 16th day, they arrange for the *karumandiram* ceremony. A Brahman priest performs the puja. The relatives

give new clothes to the children of the deceased. A nonvegetarian feast is arranged. In case of the death of the husband, the wife removes her *thali* on the 16th day. She gets new clothes from her brothers and brothers-in-law. In the past, widows used to wear only white sari, but now they wear coloured saris too.

The main source of income of the Karaiyalan is fishing. Their fishing is limited to a distance of two to three kilometers from shore and they spread their nets specially made for shore fishing. A headman, known as *cammatti*, controls the boat and 12 to 15 persons work in one boat. Local businessmen own the boats and nets and give them to the *cammatti*. These middlemen pay advances of about Rs.4000-5000 to the workers and the *cammatti*. In some cases, the fishermen sell their dry fish through the businessmen and get commissions on their fresh catch. They generally go for fishing two or three times a day, depending upon weather conditions.

The Karaiyalan have their own caste panchayat to settle disputes whose leader is elected by voice vote. All decisions, including those on divorce, are taken by this panchayat. They pay marriage fees to the caste panchayat. In case of divorces, the person who initiates the divorce has to pay Rs.2000 as a fine to the caste panchayat. They collect cash fines for other offences also.

They are Hindus and worship Murugan, Siva, Vishnu, Ganesh, Saraswati, Lakshmi, Mariammal, Kaliammal, Muniyaswamy and Karuppasamy. They have family deities too. They consider Mariammal, their main caste deity and they worship her in the month of *Avani* (August-September). The other important festivals are Pongal, Deepavali, Adi and Tirukarthigai.

The relations of the Karaiyalan with other castes of the area are cordial. But they do not have much interaction with the other castes, because their settlements are little far from the others. They have their own barber and washerman, who are paid annually. They get the services of the Brahman and the Parayan. According to them they eat only in the houses of Muslims and do not eat in the houses of any Hindu caste groups in the area. They have their own wells and have their own burial grounds.

The Karaiyalan favour formal education. But children drop out from studies at primary school itself, beause of their economic condition. They have access to some civic amenities. Few of them have electrified their houses. Various developmental programmes are available to them.

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KARALAR

The Karalar were called Karala Vellalar in the past. Etymologically, *kar* in Tamil means 'black clouds' and *alar* means 'one who rules'. This community claims that it had the power to get rain when they asked for it. Even now, Karalar men and women participate in an elaborate ritual to pray for rains when the rains fail. As their lands depend on rainfall for irrigation, this becomes a crucial ceremony. Usually, the Karalar say, the rains fall at the end of the ceremony. Men of this community used the title Vellalar in the past.

In the gazetteer of Pudukkottai District, Thiagarajan (Gandhi, 1983) states that, "The Karala Vellalar were very skillful agriculturists. Their work must have consisted of clearing forests and jungles and on tending the land fit for cultivation, building dams, and anaicuts for the rivers in the state, excavating irrigation tanks as also canals to connect the river with these tanks, and digging a large number of wells in suitably selected plains for irrigation in seasons of drought. The Karala Vellalar seem to have been possessed of the faculty amounting to instinct of finding out underground springs. They were thus able to dig wells giving an unfailing supply of water for agricultural purpose".

It is said that Tirunavukkarasar (one of the 63 Saivite saints) belonged to the Karalar community. Some claim that their community had the privilege of ceremonially handing over the crown to the priest who conducted the rituals connected with the coronation of a king. Others claim that they actually crowned the kings. The Pudukkottai Rajas also recognised their importance and gave them lands and honoured them with the title of Mirasudar. Some informants claim that Kannagi, the heroine of the Tamil epic *Silappathikaram*, belonged to the Karala Vellalar community.

The Karalar population is now spread in nine villages in Pudukkottai District and one in Tiruchchirappalli District. The Karalar speak and write in Tamil.

Till recently all the Karalar were strict vegetarian, but now some eat nonvegetarian food. However, in the manual of Pudukkottai State it is stated that the Karala Vellalar as well

as the Sozhia Vellalar eat flesh. Their staple foodgrain is rice supplemented by *ragi*. They eat all kinds of pulses, vegetables, roots, tubers and fruits. They use groundnut oil and gingelly oil for cooking. They drink coffee and tea. They chew betel-leaf, betelnuts and tobacco.

Social divisions do not exist among the Karalar. All the Karalar belong to the Siva *gotra*. The Karalar consider themselves as a community holding high rank in the region. Other communities, excepting the Brahmans and Saiva Mudaliar, also accept the high social rank of the Karalar.

They practise community endogamy. They prefer to marry a sister's daughter, father's sister's daughter or mother's brother's daughter. Sororate is not a taboo but takes place rarely. The age at marriage is 18-25 years for girls and 21-25 years for boys.

The elders negotiate and settle the marriages of their children. The boy's family initiates the alliance. Monogamy is the accepted norm. The *thali* and toe-rings are the marriage symbols. The *thali* is a gold disc, with the image of the lingam, engraved on one side. A token bride-price is paid. Widows and female divorcees are not allowed to remarry, while widowers and male divorcees are allowed to do so. Divorce is not socially approved. An informal separation is preferred. The man, if he wishes to, can marry again, but the woman either continues to live in her husband's house or returns to her natal home. There are both nuclear as well as vertically extended joint families, though the former are on the rise. Parental property is inherited by the sons and the eldest son succeeds as head of the family. A daughter gets gifts and cash during her marriage.

The women fully participate in agricultural operations. They also look after the cattle, both milch and draught animals. They participate in social functions and rituals. Karalar women normally do not take up jobs for wages. They sell any excess milk after meeting their family's requirements and the money obtained thus is presumed to be their exclusive income. A women is forced to wear white sari after her husband's death, irrespective of her age, and she is not allowed to remarry.

During the seventh month of her first pregnancy, the woman is taken to her parents' home to celebrate the *valaikappu* ritual.

She is given a new sari by her parents and wears numerous bangles on her hands. After a *nalungu* ritual, the woman's parents' offer a feast to the assembled guests. The pregnant woman then goes back to her husband's house. She returns to her natal home in the ninth month of pregnancy for her delivery. Birth pollution is observed for 15 days. On the 16th day, the baby and the mother are bathed ceremonially. Then a Brahman priest performs the *punyavachanam* ritual to terminate pollution. The child is named after an ancestor. Children are tonsured at the temple of the family deity, Ayyanar, before they are one. It is obligatory for the maternal uncle to bear the expenses of this ritual.

Puberty rites (*pennuku sadangu*) are performed for girls. On attaining menarche, the girl's maternal uncle's family is informed first. He puts up a temporary thatch-hut within the house and the girl is secluded in it. After the girl has her purificatory bath, the hut is dismantled and burnt. The girl then wears a new sari given by her maternal uncle. All relatives are invited for the feast.

The bridegroom's family usually takes the initiative in negotiating the alliance. Mother's brother, mother's brother's son and father's sister's son are the first claimants for the hand of a girl, in that order. Only if these are already married or engaged can the girl's parents accept other proposals. As most marriages are arranged within kin groups, there is no formal betrothal ceremony. The marriage is celebrated at the bride's residence. The boy's family brings raw paddy and boiling it is the first marriage ritual. Fixing a pole for the marriage *pandal* is the next important ritual. Five *sumangalis* put *kumkum*, turmeric and some coral in the pit in which the pole is fixed. To one end of the pole, they tie a bunch of mango leaves after smearing the pole with turmeric and *kumkum*. The next morning, Ganesh Puja is performed by the Brahman priest and then the bridegroom performs the *pada puja* (worship of feet) for his parents. In the evening the bridegroom's party comes in a procession with many baskets of fruits as gifts for the bride. The number of baskets of fruits, is usually 11-21. The bridegroom's younger brother, astride a horse, leads the procession. The bride's mother places a coconut, some fruit, betel leaves

and arecanuts in the hands of the bride and she gives it to the bridegroom's sister. The next day they celebrate *kanyadanam* and the tying of the *thali*, the two important marriage rituals. The consummation ceremony takes place at the bridegroom's residence on the third day.

As soon as a death occurs they send word to all relatives. They keep a lighted lamp near the dead body. If the deceased is rich, the family gives a cow, clothes, grain and vessels as gifts to seven or nine or eleven persons, as directed by the family priest, a Brahman. After the arrival of relatives and friends, they bathe the corpse, cover it with a new cloth and take it to the cremation ground on a decorated bier. They give new clothes to the Pallan, Parayan, Ambattan, Vannan and Ambalakaran, who attend the cremation and help in the death rituals. The next day they collect the mortal remains in a new pot and dispose of them in a river or tank on the 16th day. Pollution is observed for 15 days. On the 16th day, they offer cooked rice to the departed soul and to the crows. Every year, on the death anniversary, they offer raw rice, vegetables, jaggery and some money to the family priest. Ancestral worship is practised.

The Karalar are mainly a land-owning community. Of late, the educated leave their lands to the less educated or uneducated members of the family to cultivate and go to urban centres in quest of white-collar jobs. Landlords keep enough paddy for their domestic consumption and sell the rest after each harvest. They pay their labourers in cash and kind, depending on the season and nature of work.

Till recently, the Karalar had both a village panchayat as well as a traditional community panchayat. The latter was a temporary body of elderly members from their own community. It used to settle petty quarrels and property disputes and imposed nominal cash fines.

The Karalar worship their *kuladeivam* (family deity), Ayyanar, and Lord Siva. In every Karalar village there is a Siva temple in the southeastern corner of the village and an *oorani* (tank) adjacent to it. The priest in the Siva temple is a Brahman, but the priest in the Ayyanar temple is a Muthuracha or a Valayan. They celebrate Deepavali, Pongal, Karthigai and Tamil New Year's Day.

The Karalar community has an oral tradition which has preserved its folk tales. They consider the Brahman as superior to them and Saiva Mudaliar as their equals. Hence, they accept water and food from these two communities. All other communities accept water and food from them but not vice-versa. They share water sources with other neighbouring communities. They maintain cordial relations with all the service castes.

They educate their children. There are scholars, white-collar job-holders, teachers, administrators and engineers among them. They are in favour of both traditional and modern medicare and also favour family planning. They have access to civic amenities. As this is a comparatively wealthy community, its members have access to many modern facilities.

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KARNA SALE

The Karna Sale, who are also called Sale and Seniyar, are weavers who migrated to Tamil Nadu from the neighbouring districts of Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka. The men use Setti or Chetty as a title. The Karna Sale are distributed in the Chengai-MGR, Coimbatore, Madras, Madurai and Thanjavur Districts. Their migration to their present habitat is recalled only in their oral tradition.

The Karna Sale speak Telugu among thenselves and Tamil with others. They use the Tamil script.

They are occasional nonvegetarian, but do not eat pork and beef. Their staple food is rice. They eat a moderate amount of vegetables and fruit, and all types of pulses, roots and tubers. Groundnut oil is used for cooking. Men drink liquor occasionally. They drink tea, coffee, and milk and consume milk products. Men smoke *beedis* and cigarettes. Both men and women are habituated to betel chewing and some inhale snuff.

The Karna Sale community has two maximal subdivisions, the Pasupu Cheeralu (yellow saris) and Tella Cheeralu (white saris) which are patrilineal and endogamous. The Pasupu Cheeralu group claims superiority over the other.

According to Thurston (1909), the Karna Sale have only one clan (*gotra*), namely Kasi (Varanasi) but the present generation claim it to be of Markandeya. The clan contains numerous surnames or septs (*intiperlu*). Each sect is a patrilineal descent group whose members claim ancestry from an animate or an inaminate object. Thurston (ibid) reports that the following are the surname groups of the Kasi clan:

Vasthrala	— cloth
Rudrakshala	— seeds of *Elaeoarpus granitrus*
Mandha	— village common or herd
Kodavgli	— sickle
Thadle	— rope
Thatichettu	— palmyra palm
Doddi	— courtyard
Thippa	— rubbish-heap

But the present generation has a different version and the surname groups of the Markandeya clan are Nakkala (fox), Gurrala (horse), Peddamasu (name of a person), Kandula

(redgram), Masalu, Nelli and Tiruvathur (names of villages).

The Karna Sale are endogamous. Each of their maximal subgroups is also endogamous. Therefore, brides are not exchanged among the Pasupu Cheeralu and Tella Cheeralu subgroups. Exogamy is practised at the surname (*intiperlu*) level also. They prefer consanguineous marriages, the most common being between uncle-niece and cross-cousins.

The girls usually get married between the ages of 16 and 20 and boys between 18 and 25. Elders in the family negotiate and fix the marriages. Monogamy is the norm. Polygyny is also practised in case the first wife is infertile. The husband may or may not divorce the first wife in such a case and can marry his wife's younger sister (sororal-junior) or an unrelated woman. The *thalibottu* (marriage badge) and *mettelu* (toe-rings) are the marriage symbols for women. The tradition of giving dowry (*varadakshina*) prevails among the Karna Sale. It is paid both in cash and kind. Divorce is permitted with social approval, on grounds of adultery or maladjustment. Compensation is not given to anyone. Either spouse can initiate divorce. Children are the responsibility of both parents. Remarriage is permitted for widows, widowers and divorcees of either sex.

Extended families are a characteristic feature of this community. As they are traditional weavers, such families provide the required manpower for greater production and decrease the dependence on outside labour. At present, however, there seems to be a decline in extended families and a rise in nuclear families.

The Karna Sale practise the Hindu law of inheritance and all sons have equal rights over the ancestral property. It is always the eldest son who succeeds as head of the family. But if the children are too young, then the mother takes over as the head.

The women participate in the economic acivities of the family. They also have a role in social functions and rituals. They have decision-making powers and control family expenditure but have only a secondary status compared to their men.

They observe pre-delivery ritual *seemantham* during the seventh month of a woman's first pregnancy in the woman's parents' house. Post-delivery pollution is observed for seven

or nine days and terminated with a purificatory ceremony (*purudu*) when both the mother and the child are given ceremonial baths. On the same day, the child is named. Children are tonsured when they are one and their ears pierced, at the nearest temple for the community deity.

Pubertal rites are performed for girls when they attain menarche. The girl is confined to a thatched hut erected for the occasion in a corner of the house. Pollution is observed for nine days. On the third or fifth day, the girl's relations come to her house under a cloth canopy, carrying rice soaked in jaggery water. This rice, called *thadibiyam* (wet rice), is placed in a heap, then, after *arati*, distributed with betel leaves and arecanuts to those present. On the ninth day, the girl is given a ceremonial bath. The clothes she is wearing at that time are given to the washerman's family (*chakali*) and she wears new clothes and flowers. She is then blessed by the elders. A goat is sacrificed to the *kuladevata* (caste deity) and a nonvegetarian feast is given to relatives. The barbers play music on this occasion. This ritual mainly serves the purpose of announcing to the community the availability of an eligible bride. The manner in which it is celebrated reflects the social status of the family.

The weddings usually take place at the bride's residence or a nearby temple. A Brahman priest officiates. At the auspicious moment (*muhurtham*), the bridegroom ties the *thalibottu* around the neck of the bride. Then they are made to sit side by side and the elders bless the couple with benedictary rice grain (*biyyam nalugu* and *akshinthalu*). A vegetarian feast is served by the bride's parents. The couple then go to the bridegroom's house and return to the bride's residence the next day to celebrate *sobhanam* (consummation ceremony). The couple live in the patrilocal residence.

All Saivite Karna Sale bury their dead, while the Vaishnavites cremate them. The corpse in a sitting posture, is taken to the cemetery in a decorated bier. The procession is led by the person who performs the last rites. The Madiga play the drum in the death procession. All male relatives follow the procession. The corpse is buried in a sitting posture.

The Jangam blows the conch shell, rings the bell and of-

ficiates at the funerals of the Saivites. The Dasari officiates at the cremation and death rituals of the Vaishnavites. Both groups observe death pollution for 11 or 13 days. On the last day, final obsequies (*peddadinam*) are performed and a Brahman priest officiates. The relatives bathe in a tank or at a well and each offers a morsel of food (*pindam*) to the deceased. A nonvegetarian feast is served to the relatives after sacrificing a male goat or a ram. Ancestral worship is performed by both groups on *Purattasi Amavasya* day (New Moon Day in September) every year.

The Karna Sale have neither caste councils nor associations to resolve their disputes. They consider adultery, rape, elopement and theft as crimes. The families involved usually gather at one place and try to sort out the problems in an amicable way. If they fail, cases go to courts of law.

It is mainly a landless community. Traditionally they are a textile-weaving caste. Now they are engaged in a variety of occupations, such as business, trade, industrial work, government service, private service and skilled labour. Some are self-employed. However, many of them are still weavers and use handlooms.

The Karna Sale worship either Siva or Vishnu and a number of local deities. Thurston (1909) says, "The caste deity is Someswara. Some Karna Sales wear the lingam, but are not particular about keeping it on their person, leaving it in the house, and wearing it when at meals, and on important occasions". They worship Banarishi the sage from whom they have descended and as the person who conceived and created the *maggam* (loom), their source of livelihood. So, on all important occasions, they first worship Banarishi at the village temple, then perform other rituals. A few Karna Sales have been converted to Christianity.

The Karna Sale are skilled weavers. Their folk tales have been passed on from generation to generation. Folk songs are sung by the women at social functions.

Regarding the commensal relations of the Karna Sale, Thurston (1909) quotes Stuart as follows: "They freely eat in the houses of all Linga Balijas, but the latter will not eat with them. They entirely disregard the spiritual authority of the

Brahmans, recognising priests among the Linga Balijas, Jangams or Pandarams. In the exercise of their trade, they are distinguished from the Kaikolans in that they sometimes weave in silk, which the Kaikolans never do. Like the Padma Sales, the Karna Sales usually only weave coarse cotton cloths." Today, the Karna Sale eat at the houses of higher agricultural castes but others do not eat at their houses. They share wells, and graveyards with other occupational castes. The sacred specialists are available from their own community. The members of such families are authorised to perform the initiation ritual of *kodiekkinhuta* (hoisting a religious flag before the commencement of any religious festival at a temple). Only then other rituals can be performed by the Brahman if at all they are engaged. The flag-hoisting office is hereditary and the family is paid from temple funds.

The Karna Sale maintain cordial relations with other neighbouring communities. They use the services of the washerman, barber, the Jangam and the Dasari who are all paid in cash and kind. They maintain a patron-client relationship with other communities. There are businessmen, white-collar job-holders, teachers, administrators, engineers, doctors and political leaders, at the local level among them.

The literacy rate among the Karna Sale has gone up in recent years. Boys study upto college level. Some drop out if they have to support their families economically. Girls are allowed to pursue their studies upto college level if they are good at studies, otherwise they are withdrawn from school on attaining puberty.

The Karna Sale have obtained jobs through the rural employment programmes. Most are engaged in weaving silks and coarse cotton. All family members are involved in the activity. They prefer to use only handlooms as the silk so woven lasts longer and has a finer finish. In some places, such as Kanchipuram, the Karna Sale have set up a cooperatives jointly with the Padmasale to regulate the local market and to avoid exploitation by middlemen. Thus, the Karna Sale are members in the Padma Sale Vagaira Saliar Sangam — a regional co-operative society of the entire weaving caste. The Sangam also extends loans to weavers during lean seasons.

They favour both modern and traditional medicare. They accept family planning methods. The Karna Sale have access to civic amenities.

M. Lakshmanudu

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KASAI

The Kasai also call themselves Musalman or Muslim, while other communities refer to them as Saheb or Bhai. They are distributed throughout Tamil Nadu. The Kasai of Tamil Nadu belong to the Sunni sect. They got the name Kasai because they are professional butchers and sell meat. Nowadays, the Kasai claim as the Dhakkani. There are no social divisions in the community.

Urdu is their mother tongue, but most of them are conversant with Tamil.

The Kasai are nonvegetarian, but do not eat pork. Their staple foods are rice and ragi supplemented by wheat. They consume all varieties of pulses, vegetables roots and tubers. They use groundnut oil, palm oil and vegetable oil for cooking. They consume milk and milk products. They drink coffee and tea. Some men drink *sarayam*, *kallu* and other liquors.

The Kasai are an endogamous group. The law of exogamy is applicable only to very near relatives (blood relations). The age at marriage is 16-20 years for girls and 21-26 for boys. Marital alliances are negotiated by the elders. Polygamy is allowed, but most of them are monogamous. Sororal polygamy is prohibited. The payment of *mehar* to the bride by the bridegroom is compulsory, the amount of *mehar* vary according to one's economic status. Some of them also accept dowry. They follow the patrilocal rule of residence after marriage. Divorce is permitted with the consent of the *moulvi*, *zamath* and *khazi*. Either spouse can initiate divorce.

They live in both extended and nuclear families. The family is characterised by patrilocal residence and patrilineal descent. All male children have rights to ancestral property. Daughters do not have any such right, although according to Islamic rules they are supposed to inherit parental property. The eldest son succeeds as the head of the family after his father's death.

A Kasai girl is not left unmarried for long, once she attains puberty. Divorce and widow remarriages are permitted. An aged widowed mother has a respectable position in the home. Only older women now use the burka (veil). Younger women use it only during religious occasions. Girls are allowed to go

to school and colleges, but there are very few working women among them. They attend only to domestic work. They are not allowed to participate in social and religious activities along with their men. They have a secondary status in the community.

In the Kasai comunity the birth of the first child takes place in the natal house of the woman. Soon after birth, the child is bathed in warm water and fed with honey. The *moulvi* (Muslim priest) chants the *bangu* (prayer) in the ears of the child. The child is named on the day of its birth by the *moulvi* in consultation with the parents. On the seventh day, the mother and the child are given oilbaths to terminate pollution. But the mother is kept in seclusion for forty days. On the fortieth day the *moulvi* is invited to officiate at the purificatory ceremony and purificatory baths are given to the mother and child. The children are tonsured and have their ears pierced (*aqiqa*) when they are one.

The Kasai boys are circumcised (*kathna* or *sunnath*) before they are eight. A *moulvi* officiates at this function and a grand feast is arranged for the *zamath* by the boy's parents. In affluent families, the boy is taken in procession on a horse, before he undergoes circumcision.

The Kasai celebrate *pulpenli* (attainment of puberty by a girl) just as Hindus do. Pollution is observed for seven days. On the seventh day, the girl is given a ceremonial oilbath and presented with new clothes. She is fed a special diet of milk and eggs.

The betrothal ceremony is called *magni*. The Kasai celebrate marriages usually at night, because they calculate auspicious days with reference to the phase and movements of the moon. On the wedding night the bridegroom is taken in a procession on a horse, or in a car, from his house to the the bride's home. A *moulvi* conducts the wedding. When the procession reaches the bride's home, the brother of the bride receives the bridegroom and presents him with a ring. This indicates that he agrees to give his sister in marriage to him. After prayers are offered by the *moulvi*, the *thali* is tied by the bridegroom's sister around the bride's neck. The *thali* consists of a number of small black beads, known as *karimani*, strung on a thread with

a small, rod-shaped gold pendant. Before tying the *thali*, the terms between the parties are settled and the marriage contract is entered in a register maintained by the *moulvi*. The bridegroom pays the *mehar* amount to the bride. A nonvegetarian feast is served to the invitees and to the local *zamath* by the bride's parents. The following day, the bridegroom's parents organise the *walima* (reception) at their residence.

The Kasai bury their dead. The body is washed with hot water and soap. Then it is covered with a white cloth from head to foot and placed in the coffin (*janaja*). The *janaja* (an Arabic word said to mean 'corpse') is maintained by the mosque and can be obtained on demand. The corpse is placed in the *janaja*, then covered with camphor, cotton, *surma* powder and spices to prevent decomposition, then taken to the burial ground in a procession headed by the *moulvi* and *mozan*. The grave is dug by the relatives and friends. Prayers are offered for the deceased by the *moulvi*. Mourning lasts for forty days. The third, seventh, twentieth and fortieth days after the death are considered important days of mourning. On these days, special food is prepared and offered to the soul of the deceased.

The Kasai are mainly a landless community. Butchering and selling meat is their traditional occupation. Some of them are engaged in petty business and *beedi*-making. Others work as daily wage labourers. A few are employed in government and private institutions.

The Kasai have the *jamat* for social control. The *muthavalli* and *khazi* are their heads. They meet at the *khazi*'s residence or in the mosque to decide their disputes, divorces, marriages and remarriages. Divorce is sanctioned by the *khazi*. They can fix any amount as fine or compensation to be paid by the guilted or defaulter, depending on the nature of case.

The Kasai pray (*namaz*) five times a day. The imam is in charge of the mosque. He is paid a monthly salary from the mosque funds. The sources of revenue are the fees collected for marriages, deaths and other important rituals. Islamic classes are conducted in the mosque or in the *madarsa* in which the children are taught the Koran and Islamic culture. They celebrate festivals such as Ramzan, Id-ul-Fitr, Id-ul-Zuha and

Shabar. They also participate in Hindu festivals such as Pongal and Deepavali.

They accept both cooked and uncooked food from the Hindus. Only nonvegetarian Hindus accept both cooked and uncooked food from the Kasai. The Kasai also attend other Hindu festivals and ceremonies when they are invited. They share water sources, with other communities. They are on equal terms with other Muslim groups, such as the Labbai, Dhakkani and Patan and maintain commensal relations with them. The Kasai claim higher status than the other Muslim groups.

They are educating their children. They use both traditional and modern medicare. The Kasai have access to all civic amenities and government programmes.

T.S. NAIDU

KATESAR

The Katesar are also called Pattamkatti. In Tamil, the word *Katesar* means 'one who churns butter out of buttermilk'. According to a legend, there was once a war between the *devas* (gods) and *asuras* (demons). The group who churned the *amudam* (nectar) from buttermilk and offered it to the *devas* to quench their thirst came to be called Katesar. In Tamil, *pattam* means a 'reward' (silk turban) and *kattiar* means 'those who tie (the silk turban)'. So, the people who used to tie the silk turban around the heads of a new king of Rameswaram were called Pattam Kattiar. Another legend is that in ancient times there were idols of deities in Rameswaram but no temples. The then king of Rameswaram wanted to build temples to house these idols. He called on the people of Rameswaram to construct the temples and the Katesar, along with other local communities, responded. While others used ordinary conch shells in the construction, the Katesar used the *valampuri* conch shells (a type of conch shell) to make the buildings stronger. The king of Rameswaram was pleased with them and honoured them with the title Nittarasan. But Thurston (1909) mentions that the Pattamkatti and the Nittarasan are two endogamous subdivisions. The term Pattamkatti is also used as a title. Kottan is another title. The Katesar are said to be the original inhabitants of Rameswaram. They inhabited the area along the island's coast. In course of time, some of them migrated to different districts of Tamil Nadu. At present, they are distributed in the districts of Ramanathapuram, Tirunelveli and Tiruchchirappalli. Even today some of them are engaged in their traditional occupation.

The Katesar speak Tamil among themselves and also with other communities. They use the Tamil script.

They are nonvegetarian, but do not eat beef. Their staple food is rice and millets. They consume all varieties of pulses, vegetables, roots and tubers and a little fruit. They use groundnut oil for cooking. They consume milk and milk products. They drink tea and coffee. Some of them are habituated to

kallu and *sarayam*, some smoke cigarettes, *beedis* or chew betel leaves with or without tobacco. Some inhale snuff.

Social divisions exist at *kilai* (clan) level to regulate marriages. The clans, such as Topura, Pullavar, Kuttini, Attukutti, Ahatti and Kavadi are their *kilais*. According to Thurston (1909) the social position of the community is above that of the Vettiyan.

At present, the subdivisions such as the Pattamkatti and the Nittarasan do not exist. They can marry their elder sister's daughter or maternal uncle's daughter or father's sister's daughter. Both sororate and levirate are permitted among them.

The girls are married usually after they are 16 years of age. Boys marry after 21. Marital alliances are negotiated by the elders. The *thali* is the symbol of marriage. Monogamy is the norm. Polygamy is permitted only in case the first wife is infertile. Neither dowry nor bride-price is paid. They follow the patrilocal form of residence. Divorce and remarriage are permitted. Marital alliances between Hindu Katesar and Christian Katesar are also permitted. After the marriage the couple are free to follow either Hinduism or Christianity, in such cases.

The nuclear family predominate among the Katesar. Joking relations are permitted between sisters-in-law and brothers-in-law. They follow the Hindu law of inheritance. All male children have rights over their ancestral property. Daughters inherit only if they do not have brothers. The eldest son succeeds as the head of the family, after the death of his father. If any dispute arises within the community, then the *kula panchayat* intervenes and settles it by penalising the culprit.

The women participate in all social, and religious activities along with the men. They earn and contribute to the family income, mainly weaving palm-leaf baskets and palm-leaf winnows and fans. But they have a secondary status to their men.

They observe the pre-delivery ritual *valaikappu*, in the seventh month of a woman's first pregnancy. She is given bangles and sweets during this function. Then she goes to her natal home for delivery. An experienced, elderly woman acts as a midwife and conducts the delivery. They observe birth pollu-

tion for 16 days. On the 16th day, both the child and the mother are given purificatory baths and the child is named. The maternal uncle of the child gives it gifts.

Puberty rites are performed for a girl when she attains menarche (*pushpavathi*). The girl is kept secluded for 16 days. On the first day, the girl is given a bath with water in which margosa leaves have been soaked. On the 16th day, the maternal uncle of the girl presents her a silk sari, bangles and ornaments. A vegetarian feast is offered to the relatives by the father of the girl. After the feast, the relatives bless her and offer *moi* (cash gifts) to the father of the girl.

Marital alliances are arranged by negotiation. Customarily, the marriage is celebrated in the bridegroom's residence. On the wedding day, the bride is taken to the bridegroom's house. The bridegroom's sister accompanies the bride to the *manamedai* (marriage *pandal*). The main ritual of the wedding is the tying of the *thali* by the bridegroom around the bride's neck. The bridegroom ties the first knot and his sister ties the second and third knots of the *thali*. Elderly relatives bless the couple by putting holy ash on their foreheads. A vegetarian feast is served to the invitees. In the evening, the newly wedded couple visit the nearby Siva temple.

The Katesar bury their dead. The sons of the deceased bring water from a nearby canal or well in an earthen pot and pour it over the head of the corpse, as do other relatives. If the deceased is an adult male, he is dressed in a dhoti and a turban. If it is a married woman, a sari is wrapped around the body, her face and the soles of her feet are decorated with *kumkum*. Then the corpse is carried to the burial ground on a bier. The barber blows a conch shell and follows the procession. The first child in each family is cremated, while others are buried. The sons of the deceased walk around the corpse three times. During the last round the eldest son places the earthen water pot on the head of the corpse and the barber makes some holes in the pot, enabling the water to flow over the face of the corpse. Then the pot is broken. The body is placed with its head towards the north and is covered with paddy straw, cowdung cakes and wood. Then the eldest son of the deceased lights the pyre. The sons of the deceased have

their heads shaven at the cremation ground. On the second day after the death, they go to the cremation ground and collect the ashes and immerse them in water. In the case of burial, they put a floral garland and some *kumkum* on the grave. They observe death pollution for 16 days. On the 16th day, the house is cleaned and whitewashed. The sons take oil baths. A vegetarian feast is served to the relatives.

It is mainly a landless community. Their traditional as well as primary occupations are palm-leaf basket-making and fishing. Women weave baskets, while the men fish. Children help their parents in their occupations. Their products are traded through middlemen. The mode of transaction is cash. Some Katesar have recently been employed in government and other services. Some have set up small shops.

Elderly Katesar are elected members of their *kula panchayat*, which exists at the regional level. They are elected mainly by voice vote. They meet at the temple of the Goddess Vadakku Bhadrakali, their community goddess, to settle various disputes. In case of an intercaste marriage, the couple are excommunicated. If a Katesar violates community norms and disobeys the *kula panchayat*, the person and his family are socially boycotted. Their *kula panchayat* safeguards their interest and implements welfare and development measures.

In the month of *Adi*, they perform the annual ceremonial worship to the community goddess, Vadakku Bhadrakali, and sacrifices a cock to her. On the same night, the Katesar worship Sudalai, who they believe protects the community from all evil spirits. They celebrate Vinayaka Chaturthi, Deepavali, Pongal, Saraswati Puja, and Dussehra. They also worship Lord Murugan. They visit all Hindu temples.

The Katesar accept water, cooked food and uncooked food from other communities. But some of the other communities, such as the Brahman, Pillai and Idaiyar do not accept water and cooked food from the Katesar. They share water sources and burial grounds with other communities. A few political leaders have emerged from the community at the local level.

Their boys generally study upto the primary and secondary levels. Very few study in college. Girls are not sent to schools. The Katesar use both indigenous and modern medicare. They

favour family planning, but only after four or five children. They have access to civic amenities and government sponsored schemes.

N.C. SARKAR

Katesar Christian

The Katesar Christian are mainly concentrated in the Chidambaranar District.

The Katesar Christian are members of the Roman Catholic Church. They too have seven *kilais* and they are: Kavadi, Kuthi, Thoparai, Nainsakkaravarthi, Tahsildar, Metteli and the seventh is a nameless kilai. They follow some of their pre-conversion customs even today. Christians and Hindus intermarry frequently. The preferred marital alliances are with consanguineous cousins and between uncle and niece. Both sororate and levirate are permitted.

The Katesar Christian dress like their Hindu counterparts and eat the same diet. Familial relationships among them are also more or less the same as in Hindu families. Katesar Christian women have the same secondary social status as their Hindu counterparts. Their roles and occupations are also the same.

The Katesar Christian, too, perform *valaikappu* in the seventh month of a woman's first pregnancy. Birth pollution is observed for 16 days. The first birthday of the child is celebrated on a large scale. The Katesar Christian children are baptised in the church (*pudunanmai*) when they are ten.

The Katesar Christian do not observe any puberty ceremony. The girl is secluded for a few days after which she is given a purificatory bath and allowed to resume her normal life.

The age at marriage for Katesar Christian girls is 16 years or more and for boys 21 or more. Marital alliances are negotiated by the elders through the church priest. Monogamy is the norm. Their church does not permit polygamy except in rare cases. All marriages are solemnised, in the church. Neither dowry nor bride-price is paid. After marriage, they

follow the patrilocal form of residience. Both divorce and remarriages are allowed. After a marriage between a Hindu and Katesar Christian, the couple are free to follow either Hinduism or Christianity.

While negotiations for a Katesar Christian marriage are in progress, the priests of the respective churches call the banns on three successive weeks. At the wedding in the church, rings are exchanged by the couple first, followed by the tying of the *thali* by the bridegroom. The first knot of the *thali* is tied by the bridegroom and the remaining two by his sister. Then the newly married couple, along with their relatives, return home and host an elaborate feast.

Just after the death of a person, the priest of the church is informed. The news is announced by the tolling of the church bell. They give an oilbath to the corpse and cover it with a new cloth. Then they put the corpse in a wooden coffin and carry it to the burial ground. The funeral procession is led by the priest. After the coffin is lowered into the grave, the priest blesses the corpse again. Then the coffin is covered with soil. They observe a 16-day mourning period. On the 16th day after death they offer flowers at the grave. Those who can, erect a memorial stone on the grave. A feast is offered to the relatives and friends. They observe death anniversaries.

The Katesar Christian, like their Hindu counterparts, do palm-leaf basket-making and fishing for their livlihood. Nowadays, many Katesar Christian do whitewashing and painting. Women, apart from weaving baskets, also help in the painting and whitewashing.

Both the Hindu and Christian Katesar jointly have one community association known as the Tamil Nadu Pattamkattiar Sangham. It meets often to solve disputes, quarrels and cases of theft.

They observe Christmas, Easter, Good Friday and visit the church regularly. They participate in some of their pre-conversion religious and social ceremonies along with their Hindu counterparts, but do not take an active part in them.

They accept water and food from all other communities and share water sources with other communities and burial grounds with other Christian communities.

Katesar Christian boys study up to the secondary school level. Some graduates and a few postgraduates, including doctors and engineers, have emerged from the community. Generally girls study up to the primary school level. A few girls have gone upto college level. They favour modern medicare, but ayurvedic practitioners have also emerged from the community. They favour family planning, but follow only the guidelines of their church on this issue. They have access to all amenities.

N.C. SARKAR

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KATTIYAKARAN

The Kattiyakaran were the personal bodyguards of the rulers of erstwhile Travancore and escorted them during their tours. So, they had the right to carry arms to provide security to the rulers (*katthi* in Tamil means 'knife', *karan* means 'person'). With the abolition of monarchy in India, the Kattiyakaran lost their traditional occupation and were forced to become blacksmiths and farmers.

According to Pillai (1932), the Kattiyakaran are a small community — only 161 persons — of blacksmiths who were formerly engaged in smelting iron ore and manufacturing steel. The ore was obtained from a mine which once existed at Vannathukulam, about two miles to the east of Suchindram. With the advent of steel articles from the West, the mine was closed and the Kattiyakaran lost their profession. At present, they are distributed in the Kanniyakumari, Tirunelveli and Madurai Districts. They speak Tamil among themselves and also with outsiders. They use the Tamil script.

The Kattiyakaran are nonvegetarian, but do not eat beef or pork. Rice is their staple food. They eat wheat and *ragi* preparations also. They consume pulses, vegetables, roots and tubers and a small amount of fruit. They use groundnut oil for cooking. Some of their men are habituated to liquor. They consume tea, coffee and milk and consume milk products. Some of the men smoke *beedis* and cigarettes and use snuff.

Social divisions do not exist among the Kattiyakaran. The social status of them according to the community's self-perception and also by other communities is medium.

The Kattiyakaran are an endogamous community. Consanguineous marriages are more prevalent among them. They marry their sister's daughter, father's sister's daughter and mother's brother's daughter. Girls get married between 17 and 20 years, and boys between 21 and 25. Marital alliances are negotiated by their elders. Monogamy is the marital norm. Polygamy is permitted only in case the first wife is infertile. The *thali* is the symbol of marriage. Bride-price, in cash and

kind, is prevalent among them. No dowry is paid. The rule of residence, after marriage, is patrilocal. Divorce is not permitted. Widow and widower remarriages are permitted.

The Kattiyakaran live mostly in vertically extended families. Nuclear families are few. An avoidance relationship is observed between mother-in-law and son-in-law, daughter-in-law and father-in-law, sister-in-law and elder brother-in-law. A joking relationship is permitted among elder brother's wife, husband's younger brother, wife's elder and younger sister, wife's elder and younger brothers and also between grandparents and grandchildren. All children have equal rights over their parental properties. The father is the head of the family. After his death, the mother becomes the head of the family. After the death of both parents, the eldest son succeeds as the head of the family.

The women have an almost equal status with that of their men. They have equal rights over their parental properties. They take part in agricultural operations along with their men and thus contribute to the family income. They take care of their domestic animals. Their primary duties are the household work. They participate in all the social and religious activities.

The Kattiyakaran observe *valaikappu*, a pre-delivery ritual in the case of a woman's first pregnancy. In the fifth or seventh month, the pregnant woman's mother brings some sweets and also offers some *valaiyals* (glass bangles) to her daughter. She brings five sweet items if she comes in the fifth month and seven if she comes in the seventh month. After the *valaikappu*, the pregnant woman is taken to her natal home where the first delivery is conducted. The delivery is generally conducted at home with the help of a midwife. They observe birth pollution for 41 days. On the 41st day, a purificatory bath is given to both the mother and the child. A family elder names the child. The child is tonsured, when it is one, at their community temple.

When a girl attains menarche the girl is kept in seclusion for five days, after which she is given a purificatory bath by her elder sister or sister-in-law. Thereafter they perform *sadangu* (puberty rites). On that day, the maternal uncle of the girl

presents her a new sari and ornaments. A vegetarian feast is served by the girl's father to relatives.

In the past, marriage ceremonies were celebrated for five days, later it came down to three days and, now, the entire ceremony is completed within an hour in the morning. They match the horoscopes of the boy and the girl, and finalise the alliance only if they are compatible. The marriage ceremony is customarily celebrated at the bride's residence or at a community temple. A Brahman priest officiates at the wedding. The bridegroom comes in procession to the bride's house, where he is received by the bride's brother. The bride is escorted to the marriage *pandal* by the sister of the bridegroom. The tying of the *machalam* (sacred yellow thread) on the right wrists of both the bride and the bridegroom follows. Then the bridegroom ties the *thali* around the bride's neck. He ties the first knot, then the other two knots are tied by his sister. The father of the bride puts the bride's right palm on the right palm of the bridegroom and ties it with a red cloth. This is known as *kaipidithukoduthal*. Then the bride's brother walks around the marriage dias three times holding a couple of sacred lamps. The bride and bridegroom follow him. A vegetarian feast is offered to the invitees by the father of the bridegroom.

Among the Kattiyakaran, the dead are cremated. The corpse is bathed and holy ash or *vibhuti* is daubed over it, then it is wrapped in a new cloth. Four persons carry the corpse to the cremation ground on a bier. The corpse is placed on the pyre with its head towards the south. The eldest son walks around the pyre three times with an earthen pot of water on his head. After completion of the third round, he makes three holes in the pot and then breaks the pot in such a manner that the last drop of water falls into the mouth of the corpse. He then lights the pyre. Just after cremation, at the cremation ground itself, the sons have their heads, beards and moustaches shaved. On the second day after the cremation, the eldest son collects the bones and ashes and disposes of them in water. They observe death pollution for 16 days. During this time, they do not go out to work. During the pollution period, they eat only *kanji* (gruel). On the 16th day, a Brahman priest

conducts the final rites. A vegetarian feast is served. They observe death anniversaries.

At present, the Kattiyakaran work as agricultural labourers and tenant farmers. Both men and women participate in agricultural work. Some of them are engaged in horticulture and animal husbandry. A few are in government and private jobs.

The traditional caste council or *panchayat* exists at the village level among the Kattiyakaran. Office-bearers of these councils are selected by voice vote, once in three years. They also select a person to act as temple trustee for five years. The caste council meets at the community temple to solve disputes and other problems. In case of disputes with other communities, the caste councils of those communities meet with the Kattiyakaran to settle the dispute amicably. If this is not possible, they take the matter to court. Their caste council is responsible for safeguarding their community's interests and to implement welfare and developmental activities.

The Kattiyakaran are Hindus. Sudalai Madan Swamy is their community deity. They celebrate harvest festivals in their community temple after the *samba* and *kuruvai* harvests. Other communities also participate in these festivals. In the Tamil month of *Avani* they perform a special puja to the community deity. They also celebrate Pongal, Vinayaka Chaturthi, Dussehra, Deepavali, Thirukarthigai, Onam and Tamil New Year's Day. They also worship Siva, Murugan, Lakshmi, Saraswathi and Parvathi. They go on pilgrimages to Kanniyakumari, Tirupati, Madurai and Thanjavur. They engage sacred specialists from the Brahman community.

They accept water and cooked and uncooked food from all such neighbouring communities as the Vellalar, Nadar and Chettiar and exchange these items with them. During their harvest festival, all neighbouring communities accept food prepared by the Kattiyakaran. They share water sources, and cremation grounds with other communities. They visit all the religious shrines of the Hindus. Pillai (1932) mentions that the Panisivan were their community barber in the past. But now the Kattiyakaran receive the services from the village barber and washerman along with the other communities. As

Kattiyakaran are agricultural labourers, they maintain cultivator-labourer relationships with landowning communities.

Among the Kattiyakaran, only boys study up to secondary school level and a few go on to college. Most boys drop out from their studies because of poverty and the compulsion to earn. Girls are generally not sent to school beyond primary level. The Kattiyakaran use modern medicines. They favour family planning. They have access to all civic amenities.

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KATTU NAICKAN

The Kattu Naickan get their name from the words *kadu*, which means 'forest' and *nayakan* which means 'leader' or 'chief'. They are also known as Kattu Nayakan, Kadu Kurumba and Jenu Kurumba. They use Naickar as their title. They are believed to be the descendants of the Hidamasura of the *Mahabharata* epic. They are the aboriginal inhabitants of the Western Ghats and are mainly found in the Nilgiris, in Tamil Nadu and the Nilambur and Wynad hills, adjoining Kerala. They mainly inhabit the plateau, plains and the hilly terrain of the Nilgiris, Coimbatore and Madurai Districts where there is a moderate climate, high humidity, dense forests and high rainfall. Their total population is 26,383 persons according to the 1981 Census, of whom 11,577 persons are in rural areas and 14,806 persons are in urban areas. It is said that certain other communities have listed themselves under the Kattu Naickan title in order to get some benefits. This has caused an increase in their population. It is evident from that the urban popultion is more than the rural.

The Kattu Naickan, speak their own dialect, which is close to Kannada, within the family and with their kin group. They speak Tamil and Malayalam with others. They use the Tamil script. They wear an upper garment (*kuppigi*) and a lower garment (*mundu*). Both men and women have tattoo designs on their bodies. The Kattu Naickan is a Scheduled Tribe.

The Kattu Naickan are nonvegetarian, who abstain from eating beef. Rice, millets and *ragi* are their staple food items. They consume all kinds of pulses, vegetables, roots, tubers and fruit. They use either groundnut oil or coconut oil for cooking. Both men and women consume liquor, especially on festival and ceremonial days. They consume milk and milk products. Men smoke *beedis*, cigarettes and cheroot. They chew betel with tobacco. Some of them inhale snuff.

The Kattu Naickan have social divisions at the clan level with affiliated deities. They have brotherly clans based on their lineage, which indicates descent. The clans regulate their marital

alliances. There has been no change in their clan names and titles. The community's self-perception, in terms of its social status at the regional level, is middle. Others perceive it as low.

The Kattu Naickan follow endogamy at the community level and exogamy at the clan level. Marriage with one's father's sister's daughter, mother's brother's daughter or sister's daughter is preferred. The age at marriage is around 16 years for girls and 18 for boys. Marriage by negotiation, by mutual consent, by elopement and by exchange of sisters are the common modes of acquiring mates. Monogamy is the marital norm. However, polygyny is allowed with the consent of the tribal council. The *thali* is the symbol of marriage for women. Bride-price is given in both cash and kind. The rule of residence, after marriage, is patrilocal. Divorce is permitted for either spouse, with social approval and with the consent of the tribal council, on grounds of adultery, maladjustment and cruelty. Divorce compensation is given to the aggrieved party according to the decision of the tribal council. Children are the responsibility of either parent in divorce cases. Remarriage is allowed for widows, widowers and male and female divorcees.

The Kattu Naickan live mostly in nuclear families. An avoidance relationship exists between mother-in-law and son-in-law and father-in-law and daughter-in-law. A joking relationship is allowed with one's sister-in-law (wife's sister), with wife's younger brother, with elder brother's wife and between grandparents and grandchildren. Male equigeniture is the rule of inheritance. All sons get equal shares in the ancestral property. The eldest son succeeds as the head of the family.

The women have no rights to ancestral property. They participate in agricultural work. They also work in coffee and tea plantations as daily wage labourers. Some of them are engaged in animal husbandry. Others fish in inland waterways and ponds using traditional fishing nets. They collect firewood and minor forest produce, such as tamarind, soapnuts, honey, fruit, wild roots and tubers for domestic use as well as to sell in the market to earn a livelihood. They have a role in all social and religious functions. They have decision-making powers and control family expenditure. They have a lower status than their men.

The Kattu Naickan do not observe any pre-delivery rituals. Pre-delivery restrictions, however, are observed. Delivery is conducted at home with the help of an experienced woman or midwife. Post-delivery pollution is observed for three to five days. There is no special naming ceremony. They name their children after deities or ancestors. Children are tonsured during their first or third year, at the clan deity's shrine. Girl children have their ears pierced and wear palm-leaf ear-studs.

Puberty rites are observed when a girl attains menarche. The girl is kept in seclusion (*gudisai kuthirudu* — sitting in her hut) for about one month. The maternal uncle erects the hut and presents gifts to the girl.

The weddings take place at the bride's residence. The *karnavar*, or the elders, conduct the marriage rituals. They worship the tribal deities on this occasion. The maternal uncle (*mama*) has a vital role in the marriage celebrations. The marriage feast is given by the bride's parents. The consummation ceremony takes place at the bridegroom's residence.

They either bury or cremate their dead. Death pollution is observed for three days. In case of cremation, they collect the ashes and bones and bury them. They observe ancestral worship annually.

Land and forest are the main natural resources of the Kattu Naickan. It is mainly a landless community. Only a few persons hold *patta* lands. Hunting and gathering, fishing, trapping of birds and animals and labour are their traditional as well as current occupations. They also do cultivation, animal husbandry, coffee and pepper plantation work and private service. They maintain links directly as well as through middlemen with the market. They visit the weekly local markets to purchase their requirements or to sell their produce and minor forest collections. They transact in cash. The landlessness and the increase in the population size during the last decade has forced them to work as daily wage, casual, agricultural and plantation workers. Some of them are engaged by the Forest Department to clear the forest. The children assist their parents in agricultural, animal husbandry and domestic activities.

The Kattu Naickan have a tribal council or *kula panchayat* headed by the *karnavar*. It settles such cases as adultery, rape,

elopement, theft, disputes over land and water, disrespect for traditional norms, insult to the traditional council, remarriage and divorce. The offices of the tribal council members are hereditary. They get a customary *mamool* (honorarium) from the community for discharging their duties. Their concurrence should be obtained before the performance of any function or ritual. They impose social boycott, excommunication and cash fines depending upon the nature of the crime.

The Kattu Naickan follow both tribal religion and Hinduism. They have family, clan, village and regional deities. They worship all the Hindu deities. Kulian, Kali and Karungali are their tribal deities, and they worship crude stone images of them. They worship their ancestors too as well as trees and animals. They sacrifice animals to appease their deities. They visit their clan deity shrines and local Hindu temples. Some of them visit Sabarimalai, Guruvayoor and Karamadai on pilgrimage. They participate in the Mariamma, Lambalakottai and Yermadu temple festivals. The *karnavar* officiates as sacred specialist at these festivals, as well as at all socioreligious functions.

They are excellent basket-makers. They are experts in making fishing and trapping devices. They have an oral tradition regarding their legendary origin. Folk songs are sung by both men and women during marriage and other ceremonial occasions and rituals. They participate in traditional folk dances.

The Kattu Naickan maintain traditional intercommunity relations with other communities. They accept water and food from the Chola Naickan, Kurumba and Badaga communities. They maintain commensal relations with other tribal groups. They do not accept food and water from castes such as the Pallan, Chakkiliyan, Parayan and Holeya. They accept food and water from castes such as the Nair, Gounder, Chettiar and Brahman. All the higher castes accept raw materials and honey from them. They share water sources with other tribal communities. They have separate burial grounds and religious shrines. They also visit all Hindu sacred centres. They participate in all traditional temple festivals. They render their services to other communities in their economic activities. In urban areas, they receive the services of the barber and washerman.

They maintain patron-client, landlord-tenant and cultivator-labour relationship with other communities.

The Kattu Naickan have a favourable attitude towards developmental programmes. While some of their children study in Adi Dravidar residential schools, many drop out due to economic reasons. They favour both traditional and modern medicare. They are aware of family planning but most couples prefer to have three or more children. They have access to civic amenities.

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KAVUTHI

The Kavuthi are also known as Kavuthies, Kavuthiyar and Navithar. They use the title Kurup. They are locally identified by their traditional occupation of shaving. They are mainly distributed in all the four taluks of Kanniyakumari District. They believe that their ancestors migrated from the Pandya kingdom. The mother tongue of the Kavuthi is Tamil and they use its script.

The Kavuthi are regular nonvegetarian. Their staple food is rice and millet. They eat all kinds of pulses, vegtables and roots, particularly tapioca. They use groundnut and coconut oils for cooking. They eat fruit rarely. They drink tea and coffee. They consume milk and milk products. They smoke *beedis* and cigarettes. Chewing tobacco and betel as well as using snuff are common. Men drink liquor.

There are several subgroups among the Kavuthi named after the communities for whom they perform services. They are Tachcha Kavuthiyan, Kanisa Kavuthiyan and Izhuva Kavuthiyan (Thurston, 1909). They have household or surnames, the exogamous units which regulate marriage and indicate descent. But the Kavuthi proper are the barbers to the Tiyan. The community's self-perception and perception by others, like the Nair, Chetti and Bharathar, in terms of its social status, is low. They are aware of the *varna* system and consider themselves Sudras.

The Kavuthi practise endogamy at the community level. Consanguineous marriages are preferred. Both sororate and levirate are permitted. Earlier, there were child marriages but, nowadays, the age at marriage is 20 years and more for boys and over 18 for girls. Marriages are negotiated by elders. Monogamy is the norm. The *thali* and toe-rings are the symbols of marriage. No bride-price is paid, but dowry is taken, in both cash and kind. Rules of residence after marriage are either neolocal or patrilocal. Divorce is permitted with social or judicial approval. But it is resorted to rarely. Divorce compensation is given to the wife. Only the husband can initiate divorce. Children are the responsibility of either spouse in

divorce cases. Widows, widowers and male and female divorcees can remarry.

Both nuclear and mixed extended families exist among the Kavuthi. An avoidance relationship is observed between mother-in-law and son-in-law, daughter-in-law and father-in-law. A joking relationship is observed with sister-in-law and with brother-in-law. They follow the *makkathayam* (male equigeniture) rule of inheritance, and sons get equal shares of the ancestral property. The eldest son succeeds as the head of the family after the death of his father. Nuclear families are gradually on the rise.

Kavuthi women have a lower status than their men. They are mostly confined to domestic work. Most of them are illiterate. They act as midwives to the Nadar and other communities and get paid in cash and kind. They have no role in the mechanism of social control nor do they control family expenditure, though they contribute to the family income. They have no rights over their ancestral property.

Pre-delivery rituals are not observed among the Kavuthi. The first delivery takes place at the pregnant woman's natal home. Birth pollution is observed for 41 days. They perform naming and tonsuring ceremonies for the child when it is one, at a nearby temple. The temple priest officiates at the proceedings. On the same day the child is fed its first diet of cereals.

When a Kavuthi girl attains puberty, she is kept in isolation for about two weeks. She is given a special, diet prepared with blackgram, eggs and banana. On the 15th day, the *sadangu* is observed. The girl is given a purificatory oil-bath with turmeric water by her uncle's daughter. Then she is allowed to enter the house. The maternal uncle gives her some bangles, new clothes and ornaments. Close relatives are served a vegetarian feast.

Marriages are arranged through negotiations among the Kavuthi. Generally, the alliance is initiated by the boy's parents or his close relatives. If the girl's family agrees, they match the horoscopes of the boy and the girl and finalise the date of marriage. The wedding is performed at the bride's residence, usually in the evening. On the day of the marriage, the bridegroom comes in a procession to the bride's house, where

the bride's brother receives him with a garland. While the bridal couple are seated in the *pandal* in front of a sacred lamp, the bride's brother gets the *thali* blessed by all the elders, then hands it over to the bridegroom who holds it out towards the sacred lamp and then ties it around the neck of the bride. The bridegroom ties the first knot; the other two knots are tied by his sister. The couple then go around the marriage dais three times. A vegetarian feast is served. The consummation ceremony takes place at the bride's parental home.

The Kavuthi bury their dead. The corpse is bathed and clad in new clothes. Three betel leaves and a few coins are kept by the side of its head. Close relatives who offer *vaikkarisi* (rice placed in the mouth of the corpse) collect the coins. The corpse is kept in a wooden coffin and carried to the burial ground by the relatives. At the burial ground, only men offer *vaikkarisi* after going around the coffin three times. After this they lower the coffin into the grave and cover it with earth. They observe death pollution for 16 days. On the third day, all the sons get their heads shaved. They perform last rites on the 16th day and offer a feast to the relatives. They observe ancestor worship. On the eve of the first anniversary, they erect a memorial stone on the grave.

By profession, the Kavuthi are barbers. At present, they serve mainly the Nadar and receive both cash and kind from them. They also work as agricultural, plantation and daily-wage labourers. A few of them are engaged in government service.

The Kavuthi do not have any traditional caste council or panchayat. Their elders settle their disputes. Social boycott and cash fines, depending on the nature of the crime, are imposed. In case of adultery, they excommunicate the culprit, while in the case of elopement they force the boy to marry the girl, provided she is unmarried. Otherwise both are excommunicated.

The Kavuthi are Hindus. Malavatha is their family deity. They practise witchcraft and sorcery and worship different deities to protect themselves from evil spirits and to cure ailments. Their sacred specialists are from their own community. They sacrifice a he-goat or hen while worshipping Malavatha. They celebrate Onam, Deepavali and Pongal and visit Hindu religious shrines.

The Kavuthi accept water and food from all communities such as the Nadar, Nair and Chetty but these communities do not accept the same from the Kavuthi. They exchange food and water with other barber communities, *viz.* the Ambattan and the Maruthuvar. They share water sources with other communities, but have a separate burial ground. Patron-client relationships exist.

Kavuthi boys and girls study upto primary or secondary school level. Students drop out from studies due to economic reasons. They use both traditional and modern medicare. Their attitude towards family planning is not encouraging. Couples prefer to have four or more children. They have access to civic amenities.

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KAYALAR

The Muslim population of Tamil Nadu comprise both descendants of the Arab traders who married Indians and the Hindus converted to Islam by Tippu Sultan (Nambiar, 1965). The bulk of the Muslim population is distributed in Madras, North Arcot Ambedkar, Thanjavur, Tirunelveli, Ramanathapuram, South Arcot and Chidambaranar Districts. Apart from the Urdu-speaking Muslims, there are Tamil-speaking Muslims who can be subgrouped into the following four groups: Labbai, Rauther, Maraikayar and Kayalar. The Kayalar and Maraikayar primarily live on the coast of Tamil Nadu, while the Labbais and Rauther live in the interior plains of Tamil Nadu. The Kayalar are a division of the Maraikayar (Mines, 1973).

The Kayalar live mostly in the area of Kayalpattanam, a port that flourished during the Pandya reign. The Kayalar's mother tongue is Tamil. They consider all Muslims as equal and do not recognise any hierarchy among them. The women cover themselves with a white veil of white cloth while venturing out and men wear a cap. These are the identification marks of the community.

The Kayalar are nonvegetarian who may eat beef. Their staple food is rice. They consume all kinds of vegetables, roots and pulses. There is a social restriction against drinking liquor. Milk and milk products are consumed regularly by the affluent and occasionally by the rest. They drink coffee and tea. They use groundnut oil for cooking. Some of them chew betel leaves, with or without tobacco. They smoke *beedis* or cigarettes. Some inhale snuff.

Kayalar marriages are arranged by parents through negotiation. Generally boys marry between 21 and 25 and girls between 16 and 20. Weddings take place at the bride's house. They pay *mehar* at the time of the marriage. The amount varies according to the economic status of the bridegroom. They demand dowry also. The *thali* is the marriage symbol. Earlier, they used black beads for the *thali* but now they use a golden chain. They are a matrilocal society. The bride's parents construct a new house for the couple, but until then they live in the bride's house. Divorcee and widow remarriages are

allowed. Divorce is called *talak*. The divorced woman gets an amount enough to sustain her for four months. They prefer to marry their cross-cousins and parallel cousins. In the past, the Kayalar used to marry only among themselves. But now they intermarry with other Muslim groups. Though they have religious sanction to marry as many as four wives, rarely do they marry more than one.

The family pattern of the Kayalar is either joint or nuclear. The properties are divided among the sons and daughters. Girls are given one-third of their parents' property. Women are given due respect, but the family is controlled by the men. Women are now getting educated and a few of them have taken jobs.

Except for the ritual of payment by the pregnant woman's parents towards the delivery expenses, no pre- or post-delivery rituals are observed. An elderly, experienced woman from the Kayalar community attends on the delivery and is paid for her services. The child's parents decide on a name and communicate it to the priest, the *hazarat*, who officially names the child after a brief prayer.

Kayalar boys get circumcised when they are 10-15. All relatives are invited to attend the ceremony. The boy's uncles give him new clothes and others give gifts. The boy's father arranges a nonvegetarian feast. Sometimes circumcision is arranged collectively for a number of boys.

The Kayalar do not observe puberty pollution for girls. The puberty ceremony is arranged on the 16th day and is called *pal koduthal*. All the relatives are invited and the girl's father arranges a feast. The girl's mother or grandmother offers her a glass of milk after a sacred bath on this day.

The religious leader of the local mosque officiates at Kayalar weddings. The bridegroom is brought in procession to the venue of the marriage, while the bride is confined to a room where the bridegroom's mother's elder or younger sister ties the *thali* around her neck. The marriage feast is arranged by the girl's father. The consummation ceremony takes place on the second day after the wedding, at the bride's house.

The Kayalar bury their dead. The corpse is bathed and wrapped in a new cloth, and placed in the *sandhuk*, a wooden

coffin. The coffin is taken to the mosque before going to the burial ground. While burying the corpse, the head is placed towards the north and face turned towards the west. On the fourth day, they observe the *fathiha* ceremony. On this day, verses from the Koran are pronounced and a feast is arranged. Widows wear white saris.

The Kayalar are mainly businessmen and landlords. Some of the educated are in white-collar jobs. It is believed that they had business relations with Arab traders in the past. Some of them are labourers. Payments are either made in cash or kind.

The Kayalar have their own panchayat, named *zamat*. It looks after the *pallivasal* (mosque). Disputes are settled by the *zamat*.

The Kayalar Muslim men worship at the local mosques while women pray at home. Their important festivals are Ramzan and Bakrid. They observe fasting during the *Ramzan* month. Mecca is their sacred pilgrimage centre. But in Tamil Nadu, the Muslims also visit the *dargah* at Nagore.

The Kayalar have cordial relations with their neighbours. They have their own barber and washerman who are paid either annually or from time to time and who also serve the Hindus of the area. They have their own graveyard. They have an exclusive religious school where the Koran is taught. They are active in local and state-level politics and there are Kayalar members in the local panchayat.

The Kayalar educate their sons and daughters. They make use of modern medical facilities. They have access to modern civic amenities. Generally people do not opt for the modern family planning methods as these are said to be against their religious principles.

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KEMPATTI

The Kemapatti are also known as Raja Kula Vokkaligar. Arasu, Raja, Raju, Chempupatti, Keeraikara Vokkaligar and Kempatti Vokkaligar. The term *kempatti* literally means 'barracks people'. The community name has been derived from their traditional occupation, that of home guards under the Vijayanagar empire. Arasu, Raja and Raju all denote their Kshatriya status. As they are cultivators, they are referred to as Vokkaligar, like other Canarese cultivators. The word *keeraikara* literally means 'vegetable greens'. As these Vokkaligar grow vegetables, they are referred to as Keeraikara Vokkaligar by the locals. Urs, Raju and Gowder are their titles. They were soldiers and home guards during Vijayanagar rule. They are immigrants from Hampi, who migrated to their present habitat after the downfall of Vijayanagar. Some people say that they migrated during the southern invasion by the Vijayanagar chieftains. The Kempatti are distributed in the Coimbatore, Dharmapuri, Periyar, the Nilgiris and Madras Districts. They speak Kannada among themselves and Tamil with the local people. They are also conversant with Telugu. They use both Kannada and Tamil scripts. The sword and shield are their emblems. They wear turbans. Otherwise, they dress like the local Tamils. The Kempatti are not listed in any of the constitutional categories, but they claim Backward Class status under the name Vokkaligar.

Most Kempattis are nonvegetarian, unlike their counterparts in Karnataka. They were said to have been vegetarian in the past. They do not eat pork or beef. Rice and *ragi* are their staple foodgrains. They consume all varieties of pulses, vegtables and fruit. Groundnut oil is used for cooking. They do not consume liquor. They drink coffee and tea. They consume milk and milk products. Some of the men smoke, either *beedis* or cigarettes. Betel-chewing is common among both men and women. Some inhale snuff.

The Kempatti claim that they belong to the Surya vamsa (solar lineage) Kshatriya branch. It has divisions at the *gotra* level. The community has Atmastapita, Vasista, Viswamitra, Kasyapa, Palasa, Deviya, Bharadwaja, Pasupathi, Jamadagni and Kaushika *rishi gotras*. Hierarchical differentiation does not exist

Kaushika *rishi gotras*. Hierarchical differentiation does not exist between the *gotras*. The other Vokkaligar communities concede equal status to the Kempatti.

The Kempatti follow community endogamy and *gotra* exogamy. *Sagotra* (same *gotra*) marriage is prohibited. They marry their father's sister's daughter, mother's brother's daughter or sister's daughter. The age at marriage is between 16 and 18 years for girls and 21 and 25 for boys. Marriage by negotiation is the mode of acquiring a mate. Monogamy is the marital norm. The *thali* and toe-rings are the marriage symbols for women. Dowry is paid in both cash and kind. They follow the patrilocal rule of residence after marriage. It is a patrilineal and patriarchal society. Divorce is permitted with judicial approval, on grounds of maladjustment and cruelty. Divorce compensation is given to the aggrieved party as judicially sanctioned. Children are the responsibility of both parents. Remarriage is allowed for a male divorcee and a widower. Female divorcees cannot remarry. Sororate marriage is permitted in case the first wife is barren, and with her consent.

The nuclear family is the most common one among the Kempatti. They do not observe any avoidance relationship nowadays. Joking relations are allowed between elder brother's wife and husband's younger brother, with one's wife's younger brother and with grandparents and grandchildren. Male equigeniture is the rule of inheritance. The eldest son succeeds as the head of the family.

Kempatti women have no rights of inheritance. They participate in agricultural operations in their own fields as well as work as agricultural labourers. They gather vegetables and greens from their fields and market them in nearby towns. They have a role in social and religious functions. They have decision-making powers within the family. Some women are employed in government and private service. A few are engaged in self-employment and petty business. They earn and contribute to the family income. They control family expenditure.

The Kempatti observe *seemantha*, the pre-delivery ritual. Deliveries are conducted in hospital. The expenses of the first delivery are borne by the woman's parents. Post-delivery pollution is observed for about ten days. On the 11th day, the

mother and child are given a purificatory bath. Post-natal restrictions exist for about a month. They name the child on the 11th day, after an elder or a deity. Children are tonsured at the family deity's shrine or at any sacred centre, in the first or third year. The thread-wearing ceremony for the male children is now held along with the marriage rituals. Puberty (*pushpavathi*) rites are observed for girls attaining menarche. The girl is kept in seclusion for ten days. On the 11th day, she is given a purificatory bath. *Punyaham*, purificatory rites, are performed by a Brahman priest. Gifts are given to the girl and her family serve a feast.

The marriage rituals of the Kempatti are performed with Vedic rites at the bride's house. A Brahman conducts the rituals. The marriage celebrations last for two days. On the first day, the *upanayanam* (thread-wearing ceremony) and the *muhurtham* take place, on the second day the *dharadhattam* (*kanyadan*). The marriage feast is given by the bride's parents. The consummation ceremony (*shanti muhurtha*) takes place within a week at the bride's natal home.

Most Kempattis bury their dead. Only a few families cremate them. Death pollution is observed for ten days. They observe initial rites on the third day and final rites (*karumandiram*) on the 11th day. The ashes and bones are collected on the second day, in case of cremation, and disposed of in water. A Brahman priest performs the final rites. A vegetarian feast is given to relatives. Ancestor worship is done on Mahalaya Amavasya day.

Land is the natural resource for the Kempatti. This resource is controlled by individual proprietorship. While some Kempattis are small and marginal farmers many are landless. Canals and wells are their main irrigation sources. They cultivate vegetables and greens. They sell their produce to vendors or in nearby towns. Their traditional occupation was military service under the chieftains. Horticulture, cultivation, labour, animal husbandry, petty business, government and private service and self-employment are their present occupations. They maintain direct links with the local market and deal in cash. The landless work as daily wage, casual, agricultural, plantation and industrial labour. Wages are paid in both cash and kind.

The Kempatti have modern caste associations, with elected office-bearers to settle disputes. The caste associations plan and

implement welfare and development activities. They also settle disputes over land and water, deal with cases of disrespect to the traditional norms, and thefts. They impose cash fines depending upon the nature of the case. They extend financial help to poor students. They raise funds through donation.

Most Kempattis are Saivites, a few are Vaishnavites. They have family, village and regional deities. Bayala Devaru, Maravalierigi Swamy, Rama Devaru, Vedaranyar and Chamundeeswari are some of their family deities. Mariamman, Murugan and Muneeswaran are the principal village deities. They also worship Lord Venkateswara, Sri Ranganathar and Rameswarar as regional deities. They celebrate Ugadi, Sankranti, Pongal, Karthigai, Sri Ramanavami, Sivaratri, Deepavali, Dussehra and Gouri-Ganesha festivals. They hold festivals for their family and village deities. The Brahman and the Pandaram are their sacred specialists.

The Kempatti have an oral tradition regarding their migration. Folk-songs are sung by women during marriage and other social functions.

The Kempatti accept water and food from the high castes, such as the Brahman, Arya Vysyar and other Kshatriya communities. They maintain commensal relations with the Vokkaligar, Badaga, Balija, Naidu, Reddiar and Gounder. They share water sources with the high caste Hindus. They share cremation grounds with other Hindus. They participate in traditional socioreligious fairs and festivals. They receive the services of the artisan and service communities such as the Vannan, Ambattan and Kammalar. They maintain patron-client, landlord-tenant and cultivator-labour relationship with other communities. The community has businessmen, scholars, holders of white-collar jobs, teachers, engineers and doctors.

The Kempatti send their children to school. Some of their children have studied upto college level, but very few have gone in for postgraduate education. Their children drop out from studies due to economic reasons. They favour modern medicare and family planning. They have access to civic amenities.

SHAIK YASEEN SAHEB

KEPMARI

The Kepmari or Kapumari are one of what used to be called the criminal castes. They specialised in pickpocketing and other petty thefts in the past. The Telugus call them Jebumari. Etymologically, the word Kepmari or Kepumari is a corrupt form of the Telugu 'jebmari' or 'jebumari', meaning 'pocket-change' or pickpocket. They are now found in the South Arcot, Chengai-MGR and Madras Districts. They mostly live in the outskirts of a village or town. They use the surname Pillai or Mudaliar. Their mother tongue is Tamil and they use the Tamil script.

The Kepmari dress like other locals. In the past, their women wore no blouses, now they do. They also used to wear an ear ornament called *soruhu*, now they wear ear-studs.

The Kepmari are nonvegetarian, but do not eat pork or beef. Their basic food items include rice, *kevru* (*ragi*) and *kambu* (a millet) along with pulses, locally available vegetables, roots and, occasionally, fruit. They use groundnut oil and gingelly oil for cooking. They drink coffee and tea. They consume milk and milk products. Men drink liquor. Most of the men smoke *beedis* or cigarettes. They chew betel leaves with or without tobacco. Some inhale snuff.

The Kepmari are an endogamous group. They have no subdivisions. Monogamy is the norm among the Kepmari. Marriages are arranged by parents through negotiations. The *thali* is the marriage symbol. The *thali* is a yellow thread with a pendant. The Saivites engrave three horizontal lines on the pendant and the Vaishnavites engrave the symbol of the *namam* on it. Both intermarry. Boys are generally married at the age of 21-25 years and girls 15-17. Previously, bride-price used to be paid, but now this has been replaced by dowry. Marriages are conducted by a Brahman priest in a public *pandal*. Divorce is allowed and is decided by the *nattanmai* (headman). Divorcees can remarry. Compensation as fixed by the caste panchayat, is given to the divorced wife. The children live with the father. Widows are allowed to remarry. In case of widow remarriage, the new husband has to take care of her children. The rule of residence after marriage is patrilocal.

Most Kepmaris live in nuclear families. However, mixed extended families also exist. Inheritance of property is by male equigeniture. The eldest son succeeds the father as the head of the family. Sons take care of their parents during old age.

Kepmari women are consulted in every family matter. They have the right to divorce their husbands in case of ill-treatment. They work as agricultural labourers and contribute to the family income. There is no avoidance relationship. They have a joking relationship with their brothers-in-laws and sisters-in-law. They do not have any right to their parental property.

A Kepmari woman delivers her first child in her parents' house. The parents visit her home during the seventh or ninth month of her pregnancy and perform a simple ceremony during which they give her bangles and eatables. Then she is taken to their house. An elderly woman of the village attends on the delivery. The child is given castor oil or sugar water immediately after birth. Pollution is observed for 9 or 16 days. On the 9th or 16th day, the child's paternal grandparents visit the child and tie a yellow thread around its waist. The house is cleaned and both the mother and the child are given ceremonial baths. The child is named within thirty days of birth. It is named after a deity. The tonsuring and ear-boring ceremonies are arranged in the Muneeswaran temple. The maternal uncle gives the child ear-studs. The relatives offer gifts either in cash or kind to the child.

On attaining puberty, the Kepmari girl is kept in seclusion. She is given a bath on the same day or on the third day. Her maternal uncles bring her sweets, bananas and a sari. They make a separate hut by the side of the house for her to stay. Pollution is observed for nine days. They arrange for the puberty ceremony, *mañjal neerattu vizha,* on the last day. After puja is done by a Brahman priest, the girl is given a purificatory bath. Then she wears the sari brought by her maternal uncle. She is garlanded and blessed by the elders. The relatives give her gifts. A feast is served.

Among the Kepmari, the bridegroom's parents initiate the marriage proceedings. The betrothal ceremony is arranged, if the horoscopes of the boy and girl match. The boy's parents bring the girl a betrothal sari and some cosmetics. The mar-

riage takes place in the bridegroom's house. A Brahman officiates at the marriage. The bridegroom ties the *thali* around the neck of the bride. The bridegroom's sister, who stands at the back of the bride, helps him in tying it. Then the couple exchange garlands. After being blessed by the elders, they are taken into the house and given milk and bananas. All the relatives are given a feast and they give *moi* (cash gifts). Then the newly married couple are taken to the bride's house. The consummation ceremony takes place either in the bride's house or in the bridegroom's house.

The Kepmari bury their dead. But the firstborn in any family is cremated. The Parayan helps in the burying or the cremation. The corpse is carried on a bier to the burial ground by the relatives. The eldest son performs the *kolli* (breaking the earthen water pot) for the mother, the youngest for the father. The son who performs the *kolli* gets his head shaved. The corpse is buried with its head towards the south. Milk is offered to the dead soul on the second day after burial, on the third day after cremation. Death entails pollution for 16 days. On 16th day, they observe the *karumathi* ceremony. The widow removes her *thali* on this day. A vegetarian feast is served. The next day, the sons take oilbaths. The relatives are given a nonvegetarian feast. On the day of *karumathi,* they invite a Brahman to conduct *punyavachanam.*

In the past, the Kepmari were pickpocketers and petty thieves. But now they have given up their criminal activities. Some of them are agriculturalists and own lands. A few of them work as agricultural labourers. Payments are made either in cash or kind.

The Kepmari have their own caste panchayat headed by the *nattanmaikaran* (headman) whose is elected by voice vote. He controls the community and settles disputes. Cash fines are collected from the guilty.

All Kepmaris are Hindus and Muneeswaran is their caste deity. Azhagar is also their caste deity, as it is of the Kallar of Madurai, who were also once known for their criminal activities. They worship Hindu deities such as Murugan, Ganesh, Vishnu, and Parvathi and village deities such as Mariamman, Kaliamman and Karuppan.

The Kepmari have a cordial relationship with other castes. They have their barber and washerman, who receive six *marakkal* (measures) of paddy, respectively, every year, for their services. They take the services of the Parayan, Vettiyan and Brahman. They have separate wells and burial grounds.

The Kepmari send their children to schools and colleges, but they are not very interested in education. They have access to modern amenities. They favour family planning.

S. MANOHARAN

KERALA MUDALI

The Kerala Mudali are also referred to as Kavuthi or Sakkaravar or Chakkaravar by others. The name Kerala Mudali itself denotes that they have links with Kerala. The Kerala Mudali of Kanniyakumari District say that they are the original inhabitants of Kaveripoompattinam (Poompuhar), the ancient port city in Thanjavur District, from where they migrated to the south after the fall of the Chola kingdom and settled permanently in the then Travancore State, the major portion of which is part of the present Kerala State and the rest part of Tamil Nadu.

According to Pillai (1932), the Chakkaravar originally came from Kaveripoompattinam, the great trade emporium of the Chola kingdom; and were known as the Saiva Chetti Vellala. A legend recounts that one of the Chola kings gave his daughter in marriage to a son of his Saiva Chetti chief minister. The chief minister's descendants were disowned by the Saiva Chetti community and they migrated to the south. They were called Kaveripattanakkarar or Kaveriyar.

The Kerala Mudali were listed under the Kavuthi in the 1911 Census, as a barber caste, but they are really weavers and merchants. To elevate their social status, the Kavuthi began to adopt the name Chakkaravar, which was later changed to Kerala Muthali, then modified as Kerala Mudali. Thus, a new caste had sprung up by the 1931 Census.

A brief ethnographic account on the Kerala Mudali is given in the Census of India (1931). At present, the Kerala Mudali are distributed in the Kanniyakumari, Tirunelveli, Ramanathapuram, Madras and Periyar Districts with a concentration in the Vilavancode Taluk of Kanniyakumari District. The total population was recorded as 5644 — 3536 were Hindus and 2108 Christians — in the 1931 Census of India (Pillai, 1932).

The Kerala Mudali speak Tamil, which they consider their native language, among themselves and with others. They use the Tamil script. Some of them are conversant with Malayalam.

The Kerala Mudali are nonvegetarian, but do not eat beef or pork. Their staple food is rice. They consume all varieties of pulses and vegetables, roots and tubers, particularly tapioca,

and fruits. They use groundnut and coconut oils for cooking. Some of their men drink liquor. They drink tea and coffee, and consume milk and milk products. Some of the men smoke *beedis*, cigarettes, chew betel and tobacco and inhale snuff.

Among the Hindu Kerala Mudalis, there are no social divisions such as clan and subgroup, but among the Kerala Mudali Christians there are two major denominations, the Latin Catholic and the Protestant, with a number of different denominations among the Protestants.

Most Kerala Mudalis live in nuclear families. An avoidance relationship exists between mother-in-law and son-in-law, daughter-in-law and father-in-law, and sister-in-law (younger brother's wife) and elder brother-in-law (husband's elder brother). A joking relationship is permitted between consanguineal and affinal relatives. They follow the *makkathayam* rule of inheritance (all male children have equal rights over their parental property). Daughters inherit only when they do not have any brothers. The father is the head of the family. Succession is by the eldest son, after the death of his father.

Kerala Mudali women have a secondary social status compared to their men. The women do household work, look after the children and contribute to the family income by working with their men in the traditional occupation — weaving. They also participate in all social and religious activities.

The pre-delivery ritual known as *valaikappu* is observed by both Hindu and Christian Kerala Mudalis. If the pregnant woman's parents come to see her in the fifth month of pregnancy they bring five items of sweets for her. If they come in the seventh month they bring seven sweet items. On the day of *valaikappu,* Kerala Mudali Hindus offer a vegetarian feast to their relatives, while Kerala Mudali Christians offer a nonvegetarian feast. After *valaikappu,* the woman is taken to her natal home. The delivery usually takes place at home with the help of a professional midwife. They observe 31 days of birth pollution. On the 31st day, a purification ceremony is held, followed by naming of the child in a nearby temple, if it is a Hindu child. Kerala Mudali Christians go to their respective churches for the christening. When the Kerala Mudali Hindu child is one, it is tonsured at a Hindu temple. Kerala

Mudali Christians do not tonsure their children, but observe the first feeding ceremony on the child's first birthday.

Puberty rites for adolescent girls are performed by both Hindu and Christian Kerala Mudalis. On the first day of attaining menarche a purificatory bath is given to the girl by her elder sister or sister-in-law. On the fifth day, the Kerala Mudali Hindus observe *sadangu*. The maternal uncle gifts the girl a sari and ornaments. A vegetarian feast is served. The Kerala Mudali Christian perform puberty rites just before the onset of second period. From that day on, the girl is permitted to wear a sari. A nonvegetarian feast is served to relatives.

'The Kerala Mudali are an endogamous community. Consanguineous marriages are prevalent. They prefer to marry their elder sister's daughter, father's sister's daughter and mother's brother's daughter. The age of marriage is between 17 and 20 years for girls and 22 and 25 for boys. Marital alliances are usually negotiated by the elders. Monogamy is the norm. Sororal and non-sororal polygyny is also permitted. The *thali* and toe-rings are the symbols of marriage for the Hindus while among the Kerala Mudali Christian, the symbols are the *thali* and wedding ring. Dowry is paid in cash and kind. They follow the patrilocal rule of residence. Divorce with social approval is permitted among both Hindus and Christians, on grounds of maladjustment. Compensation for divorce is given to the wife. Children are the responsibility of the mother in divorce cases. A divorced woman can remarry, but thereafter loses the monthly compensation she gets from her first husband. Both widow and widower remarriage are allowed.

Marital alliances among the Kerala Mudali are negotiated by the elders, by matching the horoscopes of the boy and girl. The engagement is held at the girl's parents' house. The boy's parents offers a sari to the girl, together with some gold ornaments, and the girl's parents give the boy's parents a part of the dowry, as promised earlier. The remaining part is given on the marriage day. A vegetarian feast is served by the girl's parents. The Kerala Mudali Hindu wedding is held in the morning or at night, either at the bride's house or at a temple. Among the Christians it is held only in the morning and in the church. On the betrothal day, among Christians, the boy

the church. On the betrothal day, among Christians, the boy and girl exchange rings. A Brahman priest officiates at the Hindu marriage ceremony, while among Christians, the priest of the church officiates. On the day of the wedding, among Hindus, the bridegroom goes in a procession to the bride's house, where he is received by bride's younger brother. The bridegroom offers a gold ring to his prospective brother-in-law and they exchange floral garlands. The garland given by the bridegroom to his brother-in-law ultimately goes to the bride. The bridegroom is taken by the sister of the bride to the marriage *pandal* and is seated there in front of a sacred lamp (*kutthuvilakku*) facing the east. The bridegroom ties the first knot of the *thali* around the bride's neck and the two more knots are tied by his sister. Both bride and bridegroom exchange garlands. After the tying of the *thali*, *kanyadanam*, the ritual of handing over the bride to the bridegroom, takes place. Then the brother of the bride carries the sacred lamp around the *kamanam* (marriage dais) three times. The bride and the bridegroom follow him. *Maman kalyanam* (marriage of the mama) is a pre-marriage ritual in which the girl's maternal uncle, who has the first claim to her hand, formally renounces his right. A vegetarian feast is offered after the marriage. Among the Christians, the bride and bridegroom, accompanied by their relatives, assemble in the church on the wedding day. In the presence of a priest of the church the couple exchange wedding rings. Then the bridegroom ties the *thali* around the neck of the bride with the help of his sister. A nonvegetarian feast is served to the relatives. Marriage between the Hindu and the Christian Kerala Mudali is permitted. The couple usually follow the husband's religion. Marriage rituals, too, are done according to the boy's religion.

The Kerala Mudali bury their dead. The corpse is bathed and carried to the burial ground in a wooden coffin. The Hindus bury the corpse with its head towards the south. A ritual known as *vaikkarisi* (pouring of rice in the mouth of the dead) is performed before keeping the body in the coffin. The eldest son of the deceased brings water from the nearby tank in an earthen pot. He goes around the grave three times with the pot on his head. After each circle, a hole is made in the

pot and after the third circle he drops the pot on the ground near the head so that water may drip just above the head of the corpse. This is known as *kollikudam*. All the sons of the deceased then shave their heads and beards at the burial ground. Hindus observe 16 days of death pollution. During the pollution period they eat only *kanji*, a gruel. On the 16th day, they clean their house and serve a vegetarian feast to the relatives. By the 16th day or the first death anniversary, they erect a memorial stone on the grave.

Among the Kerala Mudali Christian, a death is announced by discontinuous tolling of the church bell. The church priest prays for the deceased by singing psalms along with other members of the church. They bathe the body and place it in a wooden coffin. The coffin is carried to the burial ground in a procession led by the priest. The coffin is buried with the head of the corpse towards the west. Christians do not observe ancestral worship, while Hindus do. After the death of a husband the *thali* of the widow is removed and she wears white sari. Both the Hindu and the Christian Kerala Mudali have a common burial ground, as well as family burial grounds, which they do not share with other communities.

The traditional occupation of the Kerala Mudali is weaving. Resources are controlled by the government through a weavers' cooperative society, from which each member gets a loan to purchase looms and yarn. They supply their products to the cooperative society and get payment either in cash or in the form of yarn. Women and children participate in this traditional occupation and, thus, contribute to the family income. Sometimes they engage members of other communities, such as the Nadar, for weaving. Some of them are engaged in business, along with their traditional weaving. They also work in the government and private sectors and also as teachers.

The Kerala Mudali Community Association, exists at the regional level. Office-bearers of the council are elected annually by voice vote. Intra- and intercommunity disputes are settled amicably by these councils. They safeguard community interests and plan and implement welfare and development activities.

Esakki Amman is the family deity of the Hindus. They worship Lord Siva, Murugan and Vinayakar. They celebrate Onam, Deepavali, Pongal and Tamil New Year's Day, visit all Hindu temples and, occasionally, churches too. The Kerala Mudali Christian observe Christmas and New Year's Day, in addition to Onam, Deepavali and Pongal and occasionally visit Hindu temples. Both the Hindu and the Christian Kerala Mudali visit Sabarimalai in Kerala and sleep at the temple complex of Lord Ayyappan in the month of February.

The Kerala Mudali accept and exchange water and food with other neighbouring communities. They share water sources with other communities. They maintain a patron-client relationship with other communities. They also have among them businessmen, teachers, defence personnel and political leaders at local level.

The Kerala Mudali educate both boys and girls. Boys study upto college level and some are postgraduates. Girls study upto secondary school level and some go to college. They use both indigenous and modern medicines. They favour family planning. They have access to all civic amenities.

N.C. SARKAR

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KHATRI

The Khatri claim to be Kshatriya and they style themselves Bhujakshatriya, the men using Sha as a title, while women use Bai at the end of their names. Locally they are called Patnulkaran by other communities. *Patnul* means 'silk cloth', and *karan* 'person who does'. The community is also known as Khatris, Kshatris, Pattegars and Samavamshi Sahasrarjun Kshatriyas. Nowadays they style themselves as Samavamshiya Sahasrarjun Kshatriyas.

The Khatri are weavers but claim to be Kshatriya, and quote *Renukapurana* as their authority. According to a legend, during the general massacre of the Kshatriyas by Parasurama, five women escaped with their children and took refuge in a Kali temple. The mothers prayed to Kali to provide them a means of livelihood. The goddess gave them looms and taught them weaving and dyeing (Thurston 1909). The Khatri also claim that they originated from Sri Raja Rajeswar Sahasrarjuna, who ruled over Maheswar in Madhya Pradesh in 2400 B.C. A temple of Sri Sahasrarjuna still exists there. They claim that a battle took place between Sri Sahasrarjuna and Sri Parasurama, the son of Jamadagni Rishi, when the former took by force the Kamadhenu from Jamadagni Rishi. The war went on between the two clans for many years and caused the death of most of the Kshatriyas (Jituri, 1976).

The Khatri are unable to trace their later history, but state that their ancestors lived near Maheswara in the north. With the Mughal invasion, the Kshatriyas left their homes in groups and migrated in different directions, going to the South and West. They took to the vocation of handloom weaving.

Their mother tongue is Khatri. Now, the Khatri speak their Khatri dialect at home and with their kin group, but Tamil with others. They are concentrated in Kanchipuram (Chengai-MGR District), Madras and Madurai.

Originally, the Khatri were vegetarian, but now they are nonvegetarian who do not eat beef or pork. Their staple food is rice. They consume all varieties of pulses, fruits and vegetables, including roots and tubers. They use groundnut and gingelly oils for cooking. They drink tea, coffee and milk and

consume milk products. Liquor used to be prohibited, but now some do drink alcoholic drinks.

The Khatri have some exogamous septs, such as Bhuygiri, Power, Kottigar, Kalpak, Dhongadi, Habeeb, Sulegar, Sonappa, Jalnapuri, Thirumalli, Katura and Domgiri. They have also adopted some Brahmanical *gotras e.g.* Gautam, Kashyapa, Vasishta and Bharadwaja. Families belonging to one social division may give their daughters in marriage to boys of another social division from which, however, they are not allowed to receive girls as wives. For example, a man of the Sulegar division may give his daughter in marriage to a man of the Power division, but may not take Power girls as wives for his sons (Thurston, 1909). Nowadays, this rule has been relaxed. They intermarry within divisions of the same clan. A North Indian community called Bhat, who are associated with the Khatri, visit them once in every three or four years and maintains the genealogies of the Khatri families by recording information of births, marriages and deaths that have taken place in the family since the last visit.

The Khatri practised child marriage, earlier. Nowadays the Khatri have given up child marriage and girls marry at 15-22 years and boys at 20-28. Marital alliances are negotiated by their elders. The *thali* is the marriage symbol. Dowry is paid in the form of ornaments, furniture and utensils. The patrilocal residence is the norm. Divorce by either spouse is permitted with the consent of the head of the community, *i.e.* the *gramani*. Nowadays, however, they prefer a judicial separation. A divorced woman is not permitted to remarry, so long as her husband is alive.

The most common form of family among the Khatri is the mixed, extended one. Nuclear families are rare. The father or the eldest son is the head of the family. The first room in the house is occupied by the head of the family. All sons share ancestral property equally. The eldest son succeeds his father after the death of the latter. An avoidance relationship exists between mother-in-law and son-in-law. A joking relationship is observed between grandparents and grandchildren, brothers-in-law and sisters-in-law.

Khatri women have a secondary status compared to their menfolk in all aspects of life. They participate in all the social

and religious activities along with their men. They help the men in their weaving and dyeing, and making of *zari* garlands. Some women are teachers, others work in government offices and a few are doctors.

The Khatri woman is taken to her natal home for the first delivery in her seventh or ninth month. The delivery is either at home or in hospital. They don't observe any birth pollution. On the 12th day after birth, they name the child. The child's father officiates at the function. Puberty rites, *pushpavathi*, are performed when a girl attains menarche. The girl is kept in seclusion for nine days. She is allowed into the kitchen on the tenth day after a purificatory bath. A vegetarian feast is served to the guests.

After negotiations, both families match the horoscopes of the boy and girl. Earlier, weddings were held over seven days, but the ceremonies are now confined to a day. Thurston (1909) has recorded the details of the marriage ceremony. On the first day, the deity Bharkodev, represented by seven quartz pebbles, is worshipped with puja and sacrifice. Nowadays the Khatri have replaced the quartz pebbles by ordinary stones and sacrifice a potato instead of a goat. On the second and third days, the house is whitewashed and the *pandal* is erected. The bridegroom, astride a horse, goes in procession to the bride's house. The bride then follows the bridegroom to his house where she sits on a decorated plank and a gold or silver ornament called *sari* or *kanthi* is presented together with new clothes. A Brahman priest writes the names of the contracting parties and the date of their marriage on two pieces of palm leaf or paper, which he hands over to their parents. On the fourth day, the bridegroom wears the sacred thread. The bridal couple worship their ancestors by offering them new clothes, milk and cooked rice. Then follows the ceremony of tying the *thali*. On the fifth day, seven betel nuts are placed in a row on a plank within the *pandal*, around which the bride and bridegroom walk seven times. At the end of each round, the bridegroom lifts the right foot of the bride, and sweeps off one of the nuts. On the sixth day, the bride receives gifts from her family. On the last day of the ceremonies, the bride is handed over to her mother-in-law by her mother who says, "I

please". The bride is taken inside the house by her mother-in-law and is shown some pots containing rice, into which she dips her right hand, saying that they are full. The mother-in-law then presents her with a gold ring and both eat together as a mark of their new relationship. All these rituals are now performed in a day. During the marriage ceremonies, vegetarian feasts are served. After the marriage, it is registered in their *samaj*. The consummation ceremony takes place the same night.

The dead among the Khatri are cremated. If a married man dies, his corpse is carried in a palanquin to the cremation ground, followed by the widow. A pot of fire is carried ahead of the palanquin. At the cremation ground, the body is laid by the side of the pyre and the widow places her *thali*, other jewellery and glass bangles on the chest of the corpse. Then the corpse is placed on the pyre, with the head facing south. The eldest son lights the pyre. They observe seven or ten days of death pollution during which nonvegetarian food is prohibited. On the third day after death, the milk-offering ceremony takes place. Three balls of wheat flour, mixed with honey and milk, are prepared, and one each is placed on the spot where the deceased breathed his last, where the bier was laid on the ground, and at the place where the corpse was cremated and milk is poured over each. The final death ceremonies (*karumandiram*) are observed on the seventh or tenth day. On the last day a vegetarian feast is served to relatives.

The major economic resource of the Khatri is business. Traditionally they are silk and cotton weavers. Besides weaving, they prepare strings or wire or thread for necklaces, *zari* garlands, and hand and waist ornaments. Some are in trade, others serve in government offices, schools and colleges. A few are doctors and lawyers. To run their traditional occupation they purchase the required raw materials, such as thread, lace, dye and sandalwood, from the market. The head of the family exercises control over the business. Some of them run silk and ribbon manufacturing factories, silk weaving powerlooms, pounding machines, flour mills, grinding mills, silk twisting machines, and breweries. They deal in cash alone.

The headman of the Khatri community is the *gramani* who is elected once in three years. He is assisted by the *vanja*, who

is elected once in three years. He is assisted by the *vanja*, who is appointed annually. They have a three-tier community organisation at regional, state and national level, called the All India Samavamsh Sahasrarjun Kshatriya Samaj. The association settles familial, social, religious or economic disputes and problems arising out of theft, adultery, rape and divorce. The *samaj* safeguards their interests and also plans and implements welfare and development activities.

The Khatri are Hindus. They worship Shakti (Goddess Kali) whom they call Toolja Matha, and whose temple is in Tooljapur, Madhya Pradesh. The deity of the community is Renukamba, the mother of Parasurama, to whom *pongal* (boiled rice) is offered and a goat or sheep is sacrificed in the month of *Thai* (January-February). She is also offered the boiled lungs and heart of the goat or sheep. They celebrate Deepavali, Pongal, Ayudha Puja, Krithigai, Tamil and Telugu New Year's Day, Dussehra and other Hindu festivals. They give maximum importance to Ayudha Puja, that is the worship of Goddess Lakshmi and Goddess Saraswathi.

The Khatri are experts in their traditional occupation of silk and cotton weaving, dyeing, making of *zari* garlands, waist cloth, shoulder cloth and bodice cloth. Besides weaving, they make threads for necklaces, tassels, hand and waist ornaments.

The Khatri accept cooked food from all neighbouring communities, except Muslims. They share water sources with other communities. They receive the services of the washerman and barber. They maintain patron-client relationship with other communities.

The Khatri educate both their boys and girls. They prefer modern medicare and have a positive attitude towards family planning. They have access to other civic amenities.

N.C. SARKAR

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KHOJA

The Khoja follow a distinct tradition and are considerably different from other Muslim sects. They recognise Aga Khan as their spiritual and religious leader and all their religious activities revolve around him.

Muslims are divided into two sects, Sunni and Shia. The Shia have three subsections, *viz.* Ithna Asharia, Zaidiyas and Ismailis. The Ismailis, who remained united till 1094 A.D., were split into two factions on the death of Al-Mustansir Billah, the Caliph. The split was mainly due to the conflict between the Caliph's two sons, Nizar and Mustali, over the succession. The Ismailis who favoured Mustali came to be known as Bohras and those who favoured Nizar as Nizarians or Khojas. The Khoja are also known as Imami Ismaili Shia or Nizari or, simply, as the followers of the Aga Khan.

Apart from the Ismaili Khoja or Aga Khani, who are in the majority and are the staunch followers of the Aga Khan, there are two other small groups of the Khoja, one of which has merged with the Sunni community, accepting the Hanafi school, and the other accepting the Ithna Asharia persuasion.

The Nizarian, who first settled in the Caspian and Persian region started migrating to Baluchistan, Kashmir, Sind and Gujarat. Later, the different groups of the Khoja slowly started spreading from western India to other important cities and business centres in India. The Khoja who came to Madras for trading purposes gradually settled here and their number, at present, is quite considerable. The Khoja have several surnames, such as Valji, Dossani, Parpaiya, Currimbhoy, Hussein and Jamal.

The Khoja speak Gujarati, Sindhi and Kachchhi, among themselves, and Hindi, Urdu and English with other communities. They use Devanagari, Perso Arabic and Roman scripts for writing. Most of the Khoja in Madras are conversant with Tamil.

The Khoja are nonvegetarian, but do not eat pork. Their staple food is wheat, supplemented by rice. They consume millets, maize and some kinds of pulses. They eat all kinds of vegetables, roots, tubers and fruit. They drink coffee and

tea. They use groundnut, mustard and sunflower oils in cooking. Though alcoholic drinks are prohibited among Muslims, some Khoja men consume them. Some Khoja men smoke cigarettes and *beedis* and both men and women chew tobacco and betel. Some of them also use snuff.

Social divisions do not exist among the Khoja, but regional differentiation is observed. The Khoja follow the customs and traditions of those communities from which they have been converted or with whom they are in close contact. Due to such differences in customs and manners, the Khoja try to establish marital alliances only with the Khoja of their own area.

The marriage of a Khoja is arranged by the parents or by elder relatives in case the parents are not alive. Marriages by courtship do occur with the mutual consent of the parties concerned. These marriages are recognised only if they are within the Khoja community. The Khoja avoid marrying the children of the same mother, stepmother, foster brothers and sisters, sister's and brother's children. The Khoja prefer both parallel and cross-cousin marriages.

In the past, pre-puberty marriages took place among the Khoja. Nowadays, the age at marriage is 18-23 years for girls and 20-25 for boys. The marital norm is monogamy. Taking a second wife is not prohibited, but is very rare. Polygamy is permitted only in case the first wife is infertile or incompatible. Both levirate and sororate are allowed. Divorce is permitted, but only with the permission of the *zamath*. Either spouse can initiate divorce. If the husband initiates it, he pays compensation to his wife. If the wife initaties it, she is not entitled to any compensation. Widow remarriage is not much approved of and a widow cannot remarry without the permission of the *mukhi* (local chief). If she does, she is excommunicated. Similarly, a divorced woman finds it hard to remarry.

Bangles, toe-rings, nose-stud and anklets are the symbols of marriage for Khoja women. The practice of paying *mehar* and dowry (*dahez*) exist. Dowry is given both in cash as well as kind. In turn, the girl's parents demand as much jewellery and clothing as possible for her along with the *mehar*.

Both nuclear and joint families are found among the Khoja, though the former are more prevalent. Joking relationsips exist between grandparents and grandchildren, maternal uncle and

nephew and niece and also between a man and his sister-in-law and a woman and her brother-in-law. They follow the male equigeniture rule of inheritance, and succession is by the eldest son. The accepted modes of residence are patrilocal and neolocal.

Khoja women do not have rights over their ancestral property. They participate along with their men in all social and religious activities. They do not observe purdah and are allowed to move freely. They assist their men in their business. They also contribute to the family income and control family expenditure. The women, however, have a lower status than that of the men.

In the case of the first delivery, the pregnant woman is taken to her natal home during the seventh or ninth month for confinement after a small ceremony at her husband's residence. On that particular day, the girl's mother comes to her house and applies *mehendi* (henna) on her hands. She also brings fruits, sweets and gifts. In turn, a dinner is given by the husband's parents to the guests. They observe birth pollution for six to nine days. On the sixth day after the child's birth, the *chatti* takes place. Till the *chatti*, no fire, salt or water will be given to outsiders from the house where the child was born. They name the child on the day of *chatti*. Among the Khoja, the paternal aunt, *i.e.* the father's sister, suggests the name. The sixth day ceremony also includes a ritual invoking of blessings for the female relatives who have died in childbirth.

The Khoja observe *aqiqa* (tonsuring ceremony) on the 21st day after the birth of a child. The child's head is shaved by a barber. Simultaneously, the father of the child and close relatives sacrifice two goats, if it is a boy, and one, if it is a girl. Among the rich, the child's hair is weighed in silver or gold coins and an equivalent amount of money is distributed to the poor. The hair and nails are thrown into a river or the sea. The cost of the skin of the goat is given to an orphanage or to the Khoja welfare society. When a child is four years, four months and four days old, the *maqtab* or *bismillah khani* ceremony is performed. It is the ceremony of uttering the name of God and initiating the child to read the Koran and learn Islamic religious practices. The child's family arranges a feast for the relatives and community leaders. Boys are

circumcised (*sunnath*) when they are five or seven years old.

There are no elaborate puberty rites for girls among the Khoja. The maternal uncle and paternal aunt present new clothes, fruits and sweets to the girl on the occasion of the purificatory rite, which is generally observed on the fifth day after the attainment of menarche.

All marriages among the Khoja have to get approval in advance from the *zamath* (community council). If a man wants to marry outside the community he has to get prior permission from the *zamath*. Otherwise he is excommunicated.

The marriage rites of the Khoja are a mixture of Hindu and Muslim rituals. The use of turmeric, coconut and rice in marriage ceremonies is very common and during happy occasions, such as weddings, only the *suhagans* (women whose husbands are alive) can play major roles. The *nikah* (wedding ceremony) is performed either in the bride's house or in the *zamath khana* (community hall) and the expenses are borne by the bride's parents. *Nikah* is performed in the presence of the *mukhi*, and a feast is given by the bride's parents. The consummation ceremony takes place at the bridegroom's residence. The day after *nikah*, the *walima* (reception) is arranged by the bridegroom's parents. In the past, Khoja marriages were celebrated over seven days. But now the entire ceremony lasts for only three days.

The Khoja give a dying person a piece of Karbala clay diluted in water. This is known as *samarchant* (holy drop). The Khoja bury their dead. They have a separate burial ground. They observe pollution for forty days. On the fortieth day, the deceased's family arrange a congregation in the *zamath khana*. During the forty days, special prayers are conducted for the departed soul in the *zamath khana*. Prayers are often offered for ancestors. On the occasion of *shab-e-barath*, offerings are made in the name of their ancestors and the men pay a visit to the burial ground to place flowers and incense sticks on the graves of their ancestors.

The Khoja are an affluent business community. Most of them deal in general merchandise, leather and crockery. Some of them are employed in private and public service.

The religion of the Khoja is centred on their belief in the Aga Khan. They pay him tribute and worship him. There are

no mosques in their localities and their *zamath khanas* serve the purpose of mosques. Some of the modern *zamath khanas* are mosque-like structures. As for ritual prayer, the Aga Khani Khoja have to pray three times, *i.e.* morning prayers known as *suboji namaz*, evening prayer known as *magrib* or *samanji namaz* and night prayers known as *isazi namaz*. The Khoja neither fast during the month of *Ramzan* nor perform Haj. Instead, they go on a pilgrimage to Persia to pay homage to the ancestors of the Aga Khan. The Khoja do not allow anyone other than their own community members to enter their *zamath khanas*. Along with Ramzan and Bakrid, they also celebrate Hindu festivals such as Deepavali, Janmashtami and Pongal.

The Khoja have a traditional community council or *zamath*. The *zamath* meets about four times a month. They elect a *mukhi* (local chief) and a *kamaria* (accountant). These posts are usually filled on an honorary basis by the wealthiest men in the community and are held by them until their death. The *zamath* has social control over its members. It has the right to excommunicate any person who violates the rules of the community. All Khojas have to compulsorily pay *dassondh* or *zakaath* (wealth tax) to the *zamath*. These funds are distributed to the poor of the community or to fakirs.

Khoja women sing folk-songs during festivals, marriages and other ceremonial occasions.

The Khoja maintain patron-client relationships with others. The burial grounds are not shared by them with others. They accept cooked and uncooked food items from all the touchable communities. But other communities do not accept cooked food from them.

The Khoja favour education for both boys and girls. Scholarships are given to Khoja boys and girls from the *zamath khana* to pursue higher studies. The Khoja community has many businessmen, traders, engineers, doctors, teachers and scholars. Some of them also hold white-collar jobs.

The Khoja favour both traditional and modern medicare. They accept family planning in general. Couples prefer two or three children. They have access to all civic amenities.

MOHAMED A.KALAM
ZUBEEDA BANU

KOLIYAN

The Koliyan are a small group of Tamil weavers mainly distributed in the Tirunelveli, Kanniyakumari, Chidambaranar and Ramanathapuram Districts. They are sparsely distributed in Thanjavur and Madurai Districts (Thurston, 1909). In the 1901 Census, they are listed as "a weaver caste the members of which were originally Parayans, but now do not eat or intermarry with the caste". They are a Scheduled Caste. They were enumerated as 7,509 persons in the 1981 Census. The Koliyan are also called Vadiriyan. Their oral tradition reveals that their ancestors kept the *sengol* (pole of justice) of the kings of the Chola dynasty. So they derive the name Koliyan from *kol-ayyan* 'one who possesses the pole of justice'.

Tamil is the mother tongue of the Koliyan and they use its script. They live in mud-walled houses with thatch roofs. The living space comprises a kitchen and a big hall. The handloom is fixed in the hall and a small ditch is made in the floor for the weaver to dangle his legs while he sits and weaves.

The Koliyan are nonvegetarian who eat pork but not beef. Rice and millet are their staple foods, supplemented by pulses. They eat all kinds of vegetables, tubers and roots. Tapioca is generally eaten by those from the Kanniyakumari District. They use groundnut and gingelly oils for cooking. Their consumption of milk and fruit is occasional. They drink coffee and tea, mostly without milk. Men drink liquor such as toddy and arrack. Most men smoke *beedis* or cigarettes. Both men and women chew betel-leaves, with or without tobacco, and use snuff.

The Koliyan are an endogamous group. There are seven different exogamous clans — Pattan, Saivan, Arumaikodi, Nambali, Arumapaninthan, Arudaipanithan and Kannihaikuriyan. They are aware of the Hindu *varna* system and consider themselves Sudras.

Marriages are arranged through negotiation. The Koliyan prefer consanguineous marriages and practise matrilateral and patrilateral cross-cousin marriages. Monògamy is the norm and polygyny is practised very rarely. The age at marriage for boys

is 21-25 years and for girls 16-21. Bride-price is paid. The *thali* is the marriage symbol. Divorce and widow remarriage are allowed. Divorce is granted by the caste panchayat. Either spouse can initiate divorce. Children live with their father after the divorce. A divorced woman returns the *thali* to her husband, while widows do not wear the *thali*. It is a patrilocal and patrilineal society.

Both extended and nuclear families exist among the Koliyan. The father is the head of the family. Sons look after their parents during their old age. Inheritance of property is through male equigeniture. After the death of the father, the eldest son becomes the head of the family. Daughters have rights only to their mother's property, if any. After the death of the mother, whatever ornaments she owned are divided among the daughters only. There is no avoidance relationship among them. They have joking relationships with their brothers-in-law and sisters-in-law.

Koliyan women have a secondary status compared to their men though they participate in all activities along with their men. They are mostly confined to domestic work. They help in all activities connecting with weaving. They are not the decision-makers in the family.

The parents of a pregnant Koliyan woman visit her house during the seventh or ninth month and observe the *pongipottu koottipoguthal* ceremony (taking the girl home, after cooking and serving her food). They adorn her with bangles and dress her in her marriage sari. A feast is given to relatives. Then they take the girl to their home for the first delivery. A midwife attends on the delivery. A palm-jaggery solution, *cenai,* is given to the newborn.

Birth, among the Koliyan, entails pollution for 16 days. On the last day, both the child and mother are given purificatory baths. *Ilaikattuthal* (tying the thread) is performed, with the grandmother tying a yellow thread around the waist of the child. The relatives are given a banana, betel leaves and a sweet. And if the family is affluent, a feast is arranged. The child is named, either on the same day or on another day. Then the mother and child return to their home. The tonsuring and ear-boring ceremonies are performed in a temple of the family deity or in the Murugan temple at Tiruchendur.

On attaining puberty, the Koliyan girl is isolated in a corner of the house and uses separate vessels for her meals. The maternal uncle gives her turmeric, betel leaves, arecanut, and some sweets and bananas. She is given a bath on the third day. Pollution is observed for 16 days and on the 16th day they observe the *sadangu* (puberty ceremony). The maternal uncle presents her a sari. She is blessed by the elders and the relatives are served a feast. They, in turn, gift the girl either cash (*moi*) or utensils. The washerwoman collects the clothes worn by the girl on the day of her attaining puberty and supplies her with clothes (*mattu*) for the pollution period.

Among the Koliyan, the bridegroom's family initiates the marital alliance. If both families agree, the betrothal ceremony or *nichayathartham* is held at the girl's house where they exchange a plate of turmeric, betel leaves, arecanut and some money. They do not observe the custom of bride-price rigidly. However, dowry is now paid, by way of ornaments and money. The marriage is arranged in the girl's house. A small *pandal* is erected in front of the house. The headman of the community, *ambalam*, presides over the function and it is he who gives the *Pillaiyar thali* to the bridegroom to tie around the neck of the bride. The bridegroom's sister helps him in tying the *thali*. The new couple exchange garlands three times. The *thali* and the marriage sari are purchased by the bridegroom's parents. A vegetarian feast is served after the wedding.

The Koliyan bury their dead. All relatives are informed of the death. The corpse is bathed with water brought from a nearby well. The washerman makes the bier and the *chakkiliyan* digs the grave at the burial ground. The corpse is clad in cloth, garlanded and carried on a bier in procession to the burial ground. Before lifting the bier, the womenfolk offer rice (*vaikkarisi*) to the dead person. During the funeral procession, the barber blows the conch-shell. The eldest son performs the *kolli*. With an earthen pot full of water on his head, he goes around the corpse three times, then breaks it near the head of the corpse, which is placed southward. The eldest-born of a family alone is cremated. All the sons have their heads shaved at the burial ground. Death entails pollution for 16 days. On the day after the funeral, they perform the milk-pouring ceremony at the grave or cremation spot. On the third day,

all the sons take oilbaths and the relatives give them new clothes. On the 16th day, they worship the deceased by offering food at the grave. A feast is served to all realatives and friends.

The Koliyan are landless people and solely depend upon weaving for their livelihood. Both men and women weave. They purchase the wooden weaving instruments from the market. Minor repairs are done by local carpenters. The threads for the looms are supplied by the cooperative society in the village, *viz.*, Vadiriyar Nesavalar Kootturavu Sankam (The Vadiriyar Weavers Cooperative Society). It was formed in 1951 and controlled by the Tamil Nadu Cooperative Society Bank. The Koliyan use the thread supplied to weave and finished goods are handed over to the Society. They are paid labour charges. They weave only cotton cloths, such as towels, lungis, dhotis and saris. The wages for weaving are fixed by the Society. Some of them have changed their occupation and collect sap from the palm trees, or work in the fields or nearby salt-pans.

The Koliyan have a caste panchayat with the *ambalam* as its head. He not only settles disputes concerning divorce and theft but also participates in socioreligious functions. He presides over marriages and gives the *thali* to the bridegroom during the *thali*-tying ritual. The panchayat collects fees for marriages and *sadangu* ceremonies. The caste association, with its headquarters at Tuticorin, implements welfare programmes for the benefit of the community.

The Koliyan are Hindus. A few are Christians. The Hindu Koliyan and the Christian Koliyan are considered to be socially equal and intermarry. Muthu Mariamman is their village deity. She is worshipped on the last Tuesday of the Tamil month *Adi* (July-August), when an animal is sacrificed. They worship Periasamy on the 18th day of the Tamil month *Chitthirai* (April-May) with the blowing of conch-shells (*sanku*). They celebrate Deepavali, Pongal and Karthigai.

The Koliyan accept food and water from the Nadar, Thevar and Mudaliar but not from the service castes such as the Chakkiliyan and Ambattan. But they use their services in return for payment. They have good relations with the other castes.

Among the Koliyan, illiteracy prevails among the older generation, but most young people have studied upto the fifth

or eighth standard. They cannot, however, afford to send their children outside their villages for higher studies. Many of their women have undergone sterilisation operations. They have access to civic amenities.

S. MANOHARAN

Koliyan Christian

The Koliyan Christian belong to different denominations. They became Christians some two to three generations ago. Though they are Christians, in the local social hierarchy they are ranked with their Hindu counterparts.

The Koliyan Christian are nonvegetarians, but do not eat beef. Their diet is similar to that of their Hindu counterparts.

There is no restriction on Koliyan Hindus and Christians and also Christians from different denominations intermarrying. In case of marriage between a Hindu and a Koliyan Christian, if the former is ready to become a Christian then he or she is baptised first, and then the marriage is arranged in the church. Otherwise, they marry in the Registrar's office.

Marriages among the Koliyan Christian are arranged by the parents through negotiation. Generally boys are married after they are 21 and girls after 18. The *thali* is the marriage symbol. Weddings take place in the church, either in the bride's or bride-groom's village or town. The *thali* has a cross engraved on it. It is strung on a golden chain or yellow thread.

The Koliyan Christian are a patrilineal and a patrilocal society like their Hindu counterparts. Other factors concerning the institution of marriage are also similar. They do not marry sister's daughters.

The family pattern of the Koliyan Christian is either nuclear or joint. Generally, couples live with their parents for some years after marriage, then move to separate households. But property is divided among the sons only after all the children are married. The Koliyan Christian educate their daughters too. Some of them now work as teachers. The women do weaving and also work as wage labourers to support the family economically.

The pregnant Koliyan Christian woman's parents visit their daughter's house during the seventh or ninth month of her pregnancy and arrange a small feast for the relatives, who pray for a normal delivery and for the health of the mother and child. Then the expectant mother goes to her natal home along with her parents. The delivery is attended on by a midwife. The child is given *cenai* (palm jaggery water) after birth. They observe pollution for thirty days. The child is baptised within a year, on which day it is also named. The mother and the child return to their home after thirty days or three months. On return, the child's father arranges a small feast and the relatives give gifts to the child. The parents of the new mother give her a sari and also cloth to make a cradle.

Roman Catholic Koliyans tonsure and bore the ears of their children at a church, usually Velankanni. Both boys and girls take Communion at the age of 10 or 15, before which they attend Bible classes for about a month in the church. On the day of Communion, the maternal uncle usually gives the child new clothes.

The Koliyan Christian observe puberty ceremonies for girls attaining menarche, just like their Hindu counterparts. Pollution is observed for 30 days.

Among the Koliyan Christian too, the bridegroom's family initiates talks for a marital alliance. The betrothal ceremony is arranged in the girl's house. The boy's father purchases the betrothal sari, blouse, coconut, fruits, betel leaves and flowers. At the time of betrothal, they decide on the dowry and ornaments to be given. The girl's father arranges a small feast for the invitees. Weddings are conducted in church. The marriage sari and the *thali* are purchased by the bridegroom's father. After the *thali*-tying ceremony in the church, the newlyweds are taken in a procession to the house. In the house, they first sit in the *pandal* and receive gifts from relatives, then they are taken into the house and are offered milk and fruit. A feast is given to all the relatives and they pay *moi* (gift money). The consummation of the marriage takes place on the same day, either in the bride's or the bridegroom's house.

In case of a death among the Koliyan Christian, the body

is bathed immediately and is kept in a sitting posture. All the relatives are informed. The corpse is carried either on a bier or in a wooden coffin to the church, where prayers are said, and then to the burial ground, where prayers are again said. The Chakkiliyan digs the grave, on which a stone cross is fixed after burial. On the third day, they arrange a feast and the sons are given new clothes. On the thirtieth day, they arrange special prayers in the house. In case of the death of one's husband, the wife removes her *thali* on the burial day. She gets new clothes from her parents and parents-in-law.

The Koliyan Christian, like their Hindu counterparts, depend upon weaving for their livelihood. The educated among them are in white-collar jobs, mostly as teachers.

The Koliyan Christian are not members of the caste panchayat of their Hindu counterparts. Disputes are generally resolved by their elders, failing which they go to court.

The Koliyan Christian celebrate Christmas, New Year's Day, Easter, Ash Wednesday and Palm Sunday. They fast for forty days before Easter.

The main link between the Koliyan Christian and other communities is the cooperative society. They have daily contacts with the other service communities, such as the barber and the washerman. They share wells with their Hindu counterparts. They share burial grounds with other Christian communities. Their relations with other communities are cordial.

The Koliyan Christians' perception of, and attitude towards, developmental programmes are the same as those of their Hindu counterparts. They enjoy the same civic amenities.

S. Manoharan

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KONDAREDDI

The Kondareddi are listed as a Scheduled Tribe in Tamil Nadu by the Government of India. However there is some controversy regarding whether they are a Scheduled Tribe or a Forward Community and the matter even went up to the Supreme Court. The community, commonly known in Tamil Nadu as Reddiar, is further classified as Poganattu Reddiar, Kongu Reddiar, Kappu Reddiar, Ganjam Reddy and Thesur Reddy apart from the Kondareddi. Most of these communities claim to have migrated to present day Tamil Nadu from Andhra Pradesh long ago. The Telugu dialect, mostly spoken by elders at home, is some evidence of this.

The Kondareddi used to suffix the title or surname Reddiar or Reddy in earlier times, but now most of them do not use titles or community surnames. The community is identified at the regional level. Their population, according to the 1971 Census report was only 1,710 persons. But, in the 1981 census, it has gone up to 31,525 persons.

The Kondareddi are occasional nonvegetarian, but do not eat pork or beef. Their staple food is rice, supplemented by pulses, cereals, millets and spices. They eat all varieties of pulses, groundnut, vegetables and fruit. They use groundnut oil in cooking. They drink coffee and tea. They were once prohibited from drinking liquor, but men now drink it on festive occasions. They chew betel leaves with betel-nuts. Some chew tobacco also. They smoke *beedis* and cigarettes. Some of them use snuff.

The Kondareddi once belonged to an endogomous group with no clans or subdivisions. Gradually, for social status as well as for marriage alliances, they have identified themselves with the Reddiar. The word Reddi in Telugu means 'headman'. Being agriculturists, at one time they enjoyed the priviledge of being headmen of the villages. With the changing times, only a few of the Reddis now enjoy that status. The Kondareddi or Reddiar do not dwell in exclusive villages or settlements. They live amidst other castes in villages.

Monogamy is the marital norm among the Kondareddi. Polygyny is allowed only when the first wife is barren. Con-

sanguineous marriages are still common, but their occurrence is gradually decreasing among the affluent families. The age at marriage among both boys and girls is increasing. Marriages are arranged by elders through negotiation and after matching horoscopes. The symbols of marriage for women are the *thali* and toe-rings. Bride-price is paid both in cash and kind. Dowry, in cash and kind, is demanded by the affluent bridegroom. The rule of residence is patrilocal. Formal divorce is looked down upon by the community. Female divorcees and widows are not allowed to remarry. Men are allowed to remarry. After marriage, the trend is towards setting up a nuclear family.

A joking relationship exists with sister-in-law and brother-in-law. An avoidance relationships exist between mother-in-law and son-in-law, daughter-in-law and father-in-law.

Inheritance is through male equigeniture. Though succession is, as a custom, by the eldest son, property is nowadays divided after the death of the father, and the mother becomes dependent on one of the sons of her choice.

The Kondareddi women have a low status, though they participate in economic activities, contribute to the family income and control family expenditure. They help in agricultural activities. They participate in religious ceremonies.

In the seventh month of a Kondareddi woman's first pregnancy, a kinship function is performed. The woman is dressed in new clothes, adorned with flowers and seated on a new mat or chair. Elderly women apply sandal paste on her arms and legs, young girls sing and dance in praise of the woman and her husband. She is adorned with bangles and a feast is served to the guests. The delivery of the first child takes place at the woman's natal home or in a hospital. The expenses connected with the first delivery are borne by the woman's parents. Post-delivery pollution is observed for 12-16 days after which a purification-cum-naming ceremony is performed. Children are tonsured at a temple, at Palani, for instance.

A puberty ceremony is observed in a modest way when a girl attains menarche. A feast is served to the immediate relatives and the girl is given gifts.

The Kondareddi cremate their dead. They have exclusive cremation grounds at the outskirt of the village.

Most Kondareddis own land. Most families have land holdings of one or two acres of dry land. It is reported that there is an increase in daily wage casual labour. Children do agricultural and unskilled labour. Payment is made in cash.

The mechanism of social control among the Kondareddi is the traditional village council for violation of social norms, and the police and courts for major crimes.

The Kondareddi are Hindus. Most of them have forgotten their family deities and worship the village deities, such as Mariamman. They also worship deities of the wider pantheon. Their sacred specialists are from other communities such as the Brahman. They participate in all village deity festivals. They also participate in the regional deity festivals.

The Kondareddi sing folk-songs at life cycle ceremonies.

The Kondareddi exchange food and water with other communities. They maintain landlord-tenant and cultivator-labour relationships with other communities.

The Kondareddi community has some entrepreneurs, scholars, white-collar job-holders, teachers, administrators, engineers, lawyers, and local level politicians.

Both Kondareddi boys and girls study up to the secondary school level. Some study further, but girls generally tend to drop out from school after the secondary level.

The Kondareddi favour modern medicare. The more affluent among them have adopted family planning methods while the poor have not. They have access to civic amenities. Consequent to the controversy over the constitutional status of the Kondareddi, their identity is under transition. Some sections have retained their identity as a Scheduled Tribe to gain Government concessions, others have not.

T.S. NATARAJAN

KONGU VAISHNAVA

The Kongu Vaishnava are also known as the Sathatha Srivaishnava. They have synonyms such as Kovil Thuraiyar, Sasvita Mudalis and Satani Mudaliar. Their titles are Aiyar and Mudaliar. A few refer to them as Velvapanpa Vaishnavas, who are considered followers of the *bhakti* cult. They claim that they were originally inhabitants of Tamil Nadu, but spread to neighbouring Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka. Many Kongu Vaishnavas still follow the religious cult of Naratheeyam, which says that the Vaishnavas should wear the *thulasi malai* (a necklace of sacred beads), the marks of the *sanku* and *chakra*, chant the *Gayathri manthram* and always meditate on Vishnu's name so as to get on the path to *moksha* (heavenly abode).

In Tamil Nadu, the identification of the Kongu Vaishnava is at the regional level. Their mother tongue is Tamil, but some are conversant with Telugu and Kannada. They use the Tamil script. Men dress in *panchakacham* (a style of wearing dhoti) and women wear the *themadi* (a sari of nine metres length).

The Kongu Vaishnava are pure vegetarian. Their staple food is rice and they eat all kinds of pulses, vegetables, roots, tubers and fruit. They use groundnut oil for cooking. They consume milk and milk products. Some of them smoke cigarettes, chew tobacco and betel and use snuff. They take only non-alcoholic drinks such as tea and coffee.

In Tamil Nadu, the Kongu Vaishnava were popularly known as *archakas* (priests). In places such as Srirangam and at other famous Vishnu shrines they were given temple duties. There is mention in the *Tholkappiam* of the Anthanan and Parpan. The Kongu Vaishnava believe that the Anthanan group came to be known as Sathathavar and Sathatha Sri Vaishnavas. They have only family names derived from the places where they lived or from their occupations. The names of their subdivisions, based on territory, are: Poovulakandar, Thiripati Vally Korambanoor, Sannathair, Serjiar, Redla Pillar, Puliankudi, Pavangarathiar, Nellonar, Thirikovilar, Poorarul, Dharumpuram, Sri Villiputhanar, Kalasa Pathakathar, Gandoonar, Kumbakonathar, Ponnuvadiar, Rangampillai, Golkondar, Sri Perumbuddarar and Tuppanaththar. The subdivisions based

on occupations are Kovilar, Poovular, Sannanthar, Ramayaram, Jajipoovalu. Divisions based on titles they received are Aravanuthevar, Ellai Korai Kadagathar, Rayar, Samakulam, Propanna Vaishnava, Sathvika Vaishnava, Telugu Vaishnava, Vara Veera Vaishnava, Kula Sekhara Vaishnava and Ramanuja Vaishnava.

The Kongu Vaishnava have clans based on which marriages takes place. A few of their clans are Ramayanam, Veera Seemanthulu, Sankithanam, Godugelu, Kalasasvakam, Kolakonda and Gandur Vaishnavas. They are exogamous social divisions (*vamsams*) which act as regulatory mechanisms for contracting marital alliances.

The Kongu Vaishnava follow community endogamy and clan and surname exogamy. Consanguineous marriages between cross-cousins and between maternal uncle and niece are permitted. The marital norm is monogamy. Marriage symbols are the *thali* and toe-rings. Both bride-price and dowry are paid.

Nuclear families are more predominant among the Kongu Vaishnava. Joint families have broken up due to economic reasons. Interpersonal relations and interfamily linkages are cordial. Joking relationships are permitted with certain categories of relations. The eldest son succeeds as head of the household. The rule of residence is patrilocal.

The Kongu Vaishnava women occupy a lower social position than their menfolk. They do mostly housework. Women participate at a minor level in social, religious and political activities. In recent years, educated women have become teachers, doctors, engineers, administrators and lawyers. Women have no right over ancestral property. Dowry given at the time of marriage is considered as property for the daughter.

The Kongu Vaishnava observe pre-delivery rituals and restrictions and post-delivery pollution. For the first delivery, the pregnant woman is brought to her natal home after the *seemantham* ceremony is held in the seventh month in her husband's house. In her natal home, her mother performs the *valaikappu* ceremony, during which she is given a new sari and bangles. Birth pollution is observed for 12 days. On the 12th day, the child is named and given sugar water. The tonsuring

ceremony is performed within the first year or the third year in the temple of their family deity.

Puberty rites (*ruthu mangala snanam*) are observed for girls. The girl, on attaining puberty, is secluded in one corner of the house for five days and given gingelly oil to drink. On the sixth day, the pollution ends with a purificatory bath. She is then allowed to enter the kitchen.

Among the Kongu Vaishnava, the *nichayathartham*, betrothal, comprises the writing of the *lagna patrikai*, or the marriage invitation. Before the marriage *muhurtham*, the bridegroom performs a mock pilgrimage, called *ranga yatra*, during which the *maithunar*, bride's brother, washes the feet of the bridegroom. Wedding rituals consist of *panigrahanam*, *i.e.* offering the hand of the bride to the bridegroom, the bride wearing the *minji* (toe-rings) and *kankanams* (wrist threads), and the tying of the *thali*. The tying of the *thali* is known as *mangaladharanam*. The marriage function ends with the couple circumambulating the *homam* seven times. The marriage feast is given by the bride's parents and the consummation ceremony is at the bride's residence.

The Kongu Vaishnava cremate their dead. When a person dies, the body is placed on a *naga pasam paddi*, a bier, with the corpse's head facing north. Death pollution ends on the 12th day. On the third day, they plant a *thulasi* plant at the cremation spot. On the fifth day, the milk-pouring ceremony is performed. On the tenth day, a *suthi* is done and on the 11th day, *Todakam* and the *Vedam* are read. On the 12th day, *suba sri karanam* is performed for the chief male mourner. On the tenth day is the *mangalya visasjanam*, when the widow removes her *thali*. They dispose of the ashes on the 12th day, in water. They also observe annual ancestor worship.

The Kongu Vaishnava either go to the police or to the law courts to settle disputes relating to property, crime, theft and rape. However, they have regional caste associations to plan and implement welfare activities for the community.

Land is the main natural resource of the Kongu Vaishnava and is controlled by individual proprietorship. Some hold land, others are landless. Their traditional occupation is priesthood. Of late, they have taken up a variety of occupations, such as

business, industry, government service and self-employment. A few of them continue to be priests to lower caste Hindus in Vaishnava temples.

The Kongu Vaishnava's religious text is *Divya Prabhandam.* The *Divya Prabhandam* verses are considered by them as the *Dravida Vedam.* They participate in the local festivals of the regional deities. Ugadi, Krishna Jayanthi, Deepavali and Vaikunta Ekadasi are their festivals.

Traditionally, the Kongu Vaishnava accept food and water from all except the Scheduled Castes and service castes. They share water sources and cremation grounds with others. They maintain symbiotic relationships, such as receiving and rendering of services, patron-client, landlord-tenant and cultivator-labourer with others. The community has entrepreneurs, scholars, white-collar job-holders, teachers, engineers, doctors and administrators.

The Kongu Vaishnava favour formal education, modern medicare and family planning. Couples prefer to have two children. They have access to civic amenities.

P. Kamalesh Kumari

KOOSA

The Koosa are a Scheduled Caste distributed in the border districts of Karnataka. In Tamil Nadu, they are mainly in Dharmapuri District. They prefer to call themselves Koosa, Kusa, Kulala and Kuyavan, while other communities refer to them as Kulala, Koosa or Kummara. Thurston (1909) recorded that the Kusa are "a subdivision of Holeya in south Canara who also call themselves as Uppara". Some of them say that they are the same as the Uppara of Mysore whose traditional occupation was the manufacture of salt from earth salt. The Kusa is also a synonym for the Ottatu, or the tile-making group of the Nayar, and Kusa Maran is a class of potters in Travancore. Kusa is also an exogamous sect of the Boyas. Present-day Kusas do not remember their connections with the people of Karnataka, but some of them speak Kannada and worship Sri Chamundeeswari of Mysore as their family deity.

Tamil is the mother tongue of the Koosa, but they also speak Telugu and Kannada. They are nonvegetarians. Their staple foods are *ragi*, rice and millets. They drink liquor occasionally. They drink coffee and tea. The men smoke *beedis* and cigarettes.

The Koosa are an endogamous group and prefer consanguineous marriages. Monogamy is the norm and polygyny is allowed only in case the first wife is barren. Marriages by exchange and elopment are permitted. The age at marriage for boys and girls are 18-26 and 15-20 years respectively. Bride-price (*parisapanam* or *voli*) is paid. The rule of residence after marriage is patrilocal.

The local name for a family is *kudumbam*. Since a family or household presupposes a house, they also use the term *veedu* to designate a family. The Koosa family is characterised by patrilocal residence and patrilineal descent. It is the basic unit of the village social organisation. Property is inherited by all sons equally. Married sons have to look after their parents even if they choose to move away from their natal home.

After marriage, a Koosa woman moves to her husband's homes. The eldest sister looks after the younger siblings in the absence of the mother. Women have a secondary status com-

pared to men. They do not have rights over ancestral property. They participate in all social and religious rituals along with their men. A woman does domestic work and contributes to the family income by selling earthen pots in the local market. She also controls family expenditure.

The Koosa do not observe any pre-delivery rituals for pregnant women. They are taken to the natal home during the seventh or ninth month for the first delivery. Most of them have their child birth at home with the help of a *thai* or midwife. They observe birth pollution for nine days. On the ninth day, the *purudu* ceremony is performed to terminate pollution. First tonsuring ceremony is performed during the first or third or fifth years. They perform this ritual at the Chamundi temple or a Murugan temple. Girl children have their ears bored on the same day. When a girl attains puberty, it entails pollution for 11 days. On the 11th day, she is given a purificatory bath and wears new clothes given by her maternal uncle. *Nalungu* is performed by elderly married women.

A Koosa marriage is preceded by the betrothal ceremony. The betrothal takes place at the girl's home. *Vethalai pakku* (betel leaves and arecanuts) are exchanged between the boy's and girls families in the presence of the *nattamaikaran* and other elders. Then the bride-price (*parisapanam*), sari and blouse are given by the boy's family. The place, date and time of the marriage are also agreed upon. The wedding takes place at the bride's home and a Brahman priest officiates at it. The *thali* consists of a turmeric piece on a turmeric-stained thread.

The Koosa bury their dead. The *pal* (milk-pouring) ceremony is performed on the third day. Death entails pollution for 11 days and is terminated by performing a ritual known as *periyakaryam* on the 11th day. All the sons of the deceased shave their heads. If the deceased person leaves behind a widow, she is taken near a well or tank and her *thali*, bangles, *metti* and *kumkum* are removed. She is given a white sari to wear. *Thalaikattal* (wearing new clothes) by the sons of the deceased is performed. A nonvegetarian feast with liquor is served to the relatives.

The Koosa are a landless community. Their traditional occupation is pot-making, which many still pursue. A few do

agriculture as their primary occupation. They sell their pots in the weekly local markets and buy their groceries there. A few of them run private dairies, as a secondary occupation.

The Koosa have a caste panchayat. The head of the village is called *nattamaikaran*. The kind of cases usually dealt in the panchayat are adultery, elopement, theft and disputes. All household heads are members of the council. A person who disobeys the verdict of the panchayat is liable to be excommunicated. The amount collected as *aparatham* (fine) is used for village deity festivals.

The Koosa worship Chamundeeswari and Lord Venkateswara as *veedu deivam* (family deities). They also worship deities such as Rama, Siva and Vigneswara. Their major sacred centres are Tirupati, Madurai, Mysore, and Palani. They celebrate Deepavali, Pongal and Krithigai. Apart from these festivals, they also celebrate the annual festivals of the village deity.

The Koosa accept food from the caste such as the Vanniyar but not from the scheduled castes. They share water sources, with other communities. They participate in all religious, occasions with other communities.

The Koosa enjoy all modern amenities. They favour family planning. They are benefited by subsidy loans.

T.S. NAIDU

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KORACHA

The Koracha are called by different names in different States. They are called Korama and Koracha in Karnataka, Kuravan and Koravan in Tamil Nadu, Yerukula in Andhra Pradesh and Kakkalan in Kerala. The Koracha in Tamil Nadu are found in the border areas of Tamil Nadu and Karnataka, but they claim Koravan as their community name. There were 23 subdivisions in the Koracha— Korava cluster representing different places of their domicile and their occupations. They are Attur Kilnad Kuravar, Attur Melnad Kuravar, Chengayampudi Kuravar, Gandarvakottai Kuravar, Dabi Kuravar, Dobba Kuravar or Dobbai Koracha, Dongaur Koracha, Inji Kuravar, Kala Kuravar, Kalinjidasi Kuravar, Monda Kuravar, Sakkaraithammadi Kuravar, Ponnai Kuravar, Salem Melnad Kuravar, Salem Uppu Kuravar, Sarangapalli Kuravar, Thalli Kuravar, Thogamalai Kuravar, Uppu Kuravar or Settipalli Kuravar, Vaduvarpatti Kuravar, Varaganeri Kuravar, Vayalpad or Navalpet Koracha and Vettai Kuravar. Many of these divisions were endogamous groups in the past, but most divisions intermarry. Subgroup identity is fading out. Some Kuravar who sell *uppu* (salt) use the title Chetty.

Regarding their origin, Thurston (1909) says, "When the great Venudu, son of Agneswathu, who was directly descended from Brahma, ruled over the Universe, he was unable to procure a son and heir to the throne, and when he died his death was looked on as an irreparable misfortune. His body was preserved. The seven ruling planets sat in solemn conclave, and consulted as to what they should do. Finally they agreed to create a being from the right thigh of the deceased Venudu, and they accordingly fashioned and gave life to Nishudu. But their work was not successful, for Nishudu turned out to be not only deformed in body, but repulsively ugly in face. It was agreed at another meeting of the planets that he was not a fit person to be placed on the throne. So they set to work again and created a being from the right shoulder of Venudu and their second effort was crowned with success. They called the second creation, Proothu ·Chakravarthi, and as he gave general satisfaction, he was placed on the throne. This supersession naturally caused the first-born Nishudu to be discon-

tented, and he sought a lonely place, in which he communed with the gods, begging of them the reason why they had created him if he was not to rule. The gods explained that he could not now be placed on the throne, as Chakravarthi had already been installed, but that he should be a ruler over forests. In this capacity Nishudu begot the Boyas, Chenchus, Yanadis and Koravas".

The Koracha converse in Tamil. Some of the elders know Koracha dialect. They use the Tamil script.

The Koracha are nonvegetarian, who abstain from eating beef. Rice, *ragi* and millets form their staple foodgrains. They eat all varieties of pulses and vegetables, roots and tubers. They use groundnut or gingelly oil for cooking. They eat locally available fruits occasionally. Men drink alcoholic drinks like toddy and arrack.

The Koracha are divided into a number of clans. Each clan name has a suffix *makka* or *magam* meaning children, *i.e.* descendants of an ancestor or from a place. Ambur Magam, Pattia Magam, Ghajati Magam, Pandi Magam, Semparuthi Magam, Orlikola Magam, Killa Magam, Tholukkaya Magam, Andia Magam and Uyyal Magam are some of their clan names. The clan is an exogamous unit.

The Koracha observe endogamy at the community level and exogamy at the clan level. All three forms of consanguineous marriages, *i.e.* father's sister's daughter, mother's brother's daughter and maternal uncle-niece marriages are prevalent. Marital alliances are negotiated by the elders. The custom of giving *parisam* (bride-price) exists in the community. Monogamy is the marital rule but a few cases of polygamy are reported. Polygamy is permitted only in case the first wife is barren. Child marriages were common in the past, but not any longer. The age at marriage is around 20 for boys, and two or three years after attaining puberty for girls. *Karugumani* (black beads) or *thali bottu* or *manjal kayaru* (turmeric-stained thread), is the marriage symbol. Divorce is permitted, with the consent of the *kula panchayat*. Either spouse has the right to move the *kula panchayat* for divorce. If it is the woman who demands the divorce, she has to return the *parisam* (bride-price) to her husband. Divorced women and widows are allowed to remarry.

Extended families predominate among the Koracha in rural areas, while nuclear families are preponderant in towns. A joking relationship is permitted between consanguineal and affinal relatives. All the sons have equal rights to ancestral property. The eldest son in the family succeeds as the head of the family after his father's death.

Koracha women make baskets and market them. Some of them do fortune-telling. Though men enjoy supreme authority in the community, women are not restrained from voicing their opinion. A woman has the right to bring her husband before the panchayat for harassment.

Usually, a pregnant Koracha woman is taken to her natal home for her first delivery. This is done during the seventh or ninth month of pregnancy. Before she goes to her natal home a simple *nalungu* ceremony is conducted in her house. On that day the pregnant woman's mother brings bangles and a few eatables for her daughter. After the *nalungu* ceremony, a small feast is arranged. Delivery is conducted at home with the help of an experienced midwife. Birth pollution is observed for 16 days. On the thirtieth day, the house is white-washed. The child is named either on the 16th or 30th day. Children are tonsured and their ears bored at a temple, usually in the shrine of their clan deity.

When a Koracha girl attains puberty she is kept in seclusion for seven days. A separate hut is made with coconut leaves by her maternal uncle. On the seventh day, he removes the hut and burns it. On that day, the girl is bathed with three pots of water and smeared with sandalwood paste and turmeric powder. On the 16th day, and in some places after a month, a ceremony called *poopu neerattu vizha* is conducted, depending on the family's economic conditions. Married women perform the *nalungu* ceremony. The girl is given new clothes by her maternal uncle. A feast is served the relatives.

When the bride's and bridegroom's families agree to an alliance, the Koracha exchange *vethalai pakku* (betel leaves and arecanuts). Traditionally toddy was exchanged between the two parties, but nowadays bottles of soft drinks are exchanged. The bridegroom's family gives some money to the bride's maternal uncle establishing their right over the bride. The

other part of the *parisam* is given to the bride's parents. A *nalungu* ceremony is conducted on the evening before the marriage. On the wedding day, a twig of the peepul tree is tied to a pole. Turmeric thread (*kangam*) is knotted around the twig. The bridal couple sit in the *pandal*. The *periyamanusan*, an elderly person, gives the *thali* to the bridegroom who ties it around the bride's neck.

The dead among the Koracha are generally buried. Those who die of infectious diseases are cremated. The eldest son performs the funeral rites. The dead body is kept outside the house. The chief mourner, along with his *pangalis* (the agnates), brings pots full of water and bathe the body. New white cloth, brought by the *pangalis* and *maman machan* (the affinals), is spread over the dead body. The corpse is carried on a *padai* (bier) to the burial ground. The body is placed in the grave in a prone posture. The chief mourner's head is shaved and a pot of water is broken. The chief mourner puts a handful of sand into the grave and is followed by the others. Death pollution is observed for 16 days. On the 16th day, the *pangalis* take a ceremonial bath, symbolically purifying themselves from the pollution.

Basketry is the traditional occupation of the Koracha community. Most of them pursue it even today. Some Koracha sell salt, some do fortune-telling. Others work as agricultural labourers. A few who are educated have got white-collar jobs. In many inaccessible areas, they have formed effective supply networks to distribute salt to people living in remote hamlets. In these areas, they use donkeys to carry the gunny bags of salt. Generally, a husband and wife team move from one hamlet to another, a journey that might last from two days to a few weeks. They also effect a barter exchange with other tribal and rural folk.

There is a traditional *kula panchayat* consisting of elderly persons. The panchayat settles petty offences, criminal as well as civil. The *periyamanusan* is the head of the village panchayat. In some places, the panchayat has a messenger called *odumpillai*. The panchayat also celebrates important social and religious functions. Cash fines are imposed in cases of theft. Divorce, too, can be sanctioned by the *kula panchayat*. They have a caste

association to look after the general welfare of the community.

The Koracha worship deities such as Ayyanar, Muneeswaran, Mariamman, Madurai Veeran, Murugan and Perumal. They also worship clan deities, such as *kattuswamy* (forest gods) distinguished from *veetuswamy* (ancestors or household gods). The temples of clan deities are situated either in the forest or in the village nearby. They celebrate all Hindu festivals. Some Koracha, in Tiruchchirappalli, have converted to Christianity.

The Koracha accept water and food, both cooked and uncooked, from all communities except the Scheduled Castes. They are the sole suppliers of bamboo products used extensively by other communities for domestic and agricultural purposes. They use the common village burial ground. They receive the services of the barber, washerwoman and the Parayan.

The Koracha are too poor to send their children to school. The children assist their parents in economic activities from an early age. Even amongst those who go to school, very few go up to the secondary school level. Dropouts are more in the case of girls than boys. The Midday Meal Scheme acts as an incentive to send the children to school to some extent. They visit primary health centres for modern medical treatment. A few Korachas have accepted family planning. They have access to all civic amenities.

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KORAVAR

The Koravar also refer to themselves as Kuravar but for official purposes most of them record their identity as Kuravan, which falls under the Scheduled Caste category. The term Kuravan is etymologically derived from the word *kuram* meaning 'fortune-telling' in Tamil. Fortune-telling is considered one of their traditional occupations. Another version is that Kuravan is the corrupt form of *kunravan*, meaning 'hill-man' in Tamil, as they originally lived in the hills (*kunru* = hill).

It is said that, in ancient times, the Kuravar, Koracha and Yerukula lived as a single larger group in the hills and in areas adjoining forests. They had four basic exogamous divisions, Men padi, Mendra kutthi, Sath padi and Kavadi on the basis of their social organisation. In course of time, when they migrated to different parts of the plains, for reasons unknown, they took up occupations such as basket-making, fortune-telling, rearing of pigs and selling salt and lime. They, thus, became divided by their occupational and territorial affiliations. When a sizeable number of them took up burglary as a lifestyle, the community was brought under the Criminal Tribes Act by the British Government. Till the turn of this century, some of them were employed as *kavalkarar* (watchmen) in villages.

After Independence, particularly during the last three decades, efforts have been made to unite the community. An association called the Tamil Nadu Kuravar Mahajana Sangam was set up in 1963 for this purpose. At present they live in villages, towns and cities as clusters of families or scattered as individual families in almost all the districts of Tamil Nadu, with greater concentrations in Salem, North Arcot Ambedkar, Madras, Tiruchchirappalli, Pudukkottai, Madurai and Thanjavur Districts.

Some descriptions about the Koravar lifestyle, occupation and the environment to which they were confined are available through the verses from Sangam literature and literary works of a later period. According to legend, they are the sons of Venudu, a direct descendant of Lord Brahma, born out of the embalmed thigh of the latter. Another story relates that they

are the sons of Dharmaraja through a woman who followed him in the guise of a fortune-teller. Some of them believe that they are sons of Nambirajan and were originally hunters. Accordomg to an anothert myth the Goddess Parvathi once desired to perform the Gowri Nonbu and wanted a winnow for the ritual. On her request, Siva ordered Rishaba (the vehicle of Lord Siva) to produce a man expert in making winnows. That man became the ancestor of the Thappai Kuravar.

The language spoken by the Koravar is a dialect of Tamil, namely Kurruvattha, which shows traces of Telugu and Kannada. But only the elderly speak this dialect. The young mainly speak Tamil. They use the Tamil script.

The Koravar are nonvegetarian, who relish pork, squirrels, field rats and other small forest animals, but do not eat beef. *Ragi, cholam,* rice and millets form their staple foodgrains. They eat all available pulses, vegetables and fruit, particularly bananas. Groundnut and sesamum oils are used for cooking. Changes in food habits are observed among those who are reasonably educated and moderately affluent. They have given up their old habits of eating animals like squirrels and rats. It can be said that higher their economic status, the more the consumption of rice. They consume milk and milk products. Men drink toddy and arrack regularly.

The Koravar say that until a few decades ago there existed several endogamous divisions among them, based on occupation or territory.

Many other territorial subdivisions which were said to exist according to the list of denotified communities in Tamil Nadu, *viz.* Gandharvakottai Kuravar or G.K. Koravar (Gandharvakottai, being a place), Ponnai Koravar, Sakkaraithammadi Koravar, Sarangapalli Koravar, Vaduvarpatti Koravar and Varaganeri Koravar are unidentifiable at present as most of them have changed their identity to, simply, Koravan.

The Koravar spread over the Attur, Omalur and Mettur Taluks of Salem District and Harur taluk of Dharmapuri District seem to possess a common social organisation based on which marital alliances have been taking place among them for generations. For example, in the Attur taluk of Salem District,

two groups of brotherly lineages are recognised. Ambur Magam, Pattia Magam, Ghatri Magam, Pandi Magam, Semparuthi Magam, Ootikkolu Magam, Killa Magam and so on form one group of brotherly clans; while Thalakkaya Magam, Andi Magam, Uyyala Magam etc. form another group of brotherly clans. A person belonging to one group chooses a spouse from the other group. In the Mettur taluk of Salem District, Pandi Magam, Theevatta Magam, Polri Magam, Palri Magam, Boda Magam and Jallikundra Magam exist. Pandi Magam and Palri Magam are considered brotherly to each other. In the Omalur taluk of Salem District and Harur taluk of Dharmapuri District, social divisions such as Satthupadi Makka (*magam* is sometimes replaced by the term *makka*), Jetthuppadi Makka, Vellakoyi Makka, Killa Makka, Pandi Makka and Uyyala Makka are found among the Koravar.

The Koravar living in these areas intermarry with the Koravar and Yerukula of Madras and other districts, although they are sometimes unable to recognise the social divisions of each other, as many of them are recent in origin and territory based.

An important feature of the Koravar community in general is that they are broadly divided into four major exogamous or *kulam,* namely Satha padi, Men padi, Mendra Kutthi and Kavadi. These are also recognised as Munipadi, Sathapadi, Melutthar and Kavadiyan in some places. Each kulam comprises of several brotherly clans, *i.e. magam* or *makka,* and the members of these clans are related to each other as *pangalis* (fraternal relations). According to a myth, the members of these major kulams are descendants of four mythical ancestors who discovered a stone image when they were tilling the land. The person who cleaned the image with sacred ash and adorned it with flowers and vermilion came to be known as Sathapadi. Of the remaining two, one sang songs in praise of God and offered puja. He got the name Munipadi or Manpadi and the other presented a pair of shoes and came to be known as Mendragutti or Menrikutti. The one who recognised the image as Murugan and propitiated Him by offering a *kavadi* (a decorated pole carried over shoulder with offerings to God in baskets hanging from the ends). Thus, he acquired the name Kavadiyan.

A Koravar girl is married two or three years after she attains puberty. For men, the age at marriage is 20 years. Monogamy is the rule. Polygyny is allowed in case the first wife is barren. Child marriages (*chella kalyanam*) were quite common in the past, but not any longer. All three forms of consanguineous marriages, *i.e.* father's sister's daughter, mother's brother's daughter and maternal uncle-niece marriages, are common among them. Sororate is practised. Widow and widower remarriages are allowed. Marital alliances are negotiated by the elders. The custom is to give a token *pariyam* or *parisam*. *Karugumani* (black beads) or *thali bottu* or *manjal kayaru*, are their marriage symbols. Divorce is permitted with the consent of the *kula panchayat*. Either spouse can seek divorce. If it is the woman who asks for the divorce, the *parisam* is returned to the husband. Divorced women and widows are allowed to remarry.

Nuclear families are more common among the Koravar. The eldest male in the family is the head and takes all the important decisions. They follow the Hindu law of inheritance. All the sons have equal rights to their ancestral property. The eldest son succeeds as the head of the family, after his father's death. Extended families predominate in rural areas. It is common to find a consanguineous family living at the periphery of a village, catering to the local needs. Both collateral and lineal extended families are found. A joking relationship is permitted between consanguineal and affinal relatives.

The Koravar women make baskets, weave mats and winnows and fortune-tell (*kuri solludhal*) along with their men, besides taking care of their domestic responsibilites. It is usually the women who sell the baskets and mats in the streets. Though men enjoy ultimate authority, women are not restrained from voicing their opinion. Women have the right to bring their husbands before the panchayat for harassment.

Generally, pregnant Koravar women go to their natal home during the seventh or ninth month of their first confinement. A simple *nalungu* ceremony is performed at the husband's house. The pregnant woman's mother brings bangles and a few eatables for her daughter. After a small feast, the pregnant woman is taken to her natal home. An experienced midwife

attends on the delivery. They observe birth pollution for 16 days. On the 16th day, the mother and child are bathed. The child's maternal uncle brings a chicken for a feast. On the thirtieth day, the house is whitewashed. Meat or chicken and cooked rice are offered to the *veetuswamy* (ancestors). The child is named on the 16th or 30th day, usually, after a deity.

The Koravar children are tonsured at a temple, usually the shrine of the clan deity. The child's maternal uncle brings new clothes and gives the *mudi edukkura kasu* (money for removing hair). This ceremony is performed when the child is a year old. On the same day, the child's ears are also pierced. The child's maternal uncle brings the earrings.

When a Koravar girl attains puberty, a conical hut is built with coconut or palm leaves and she is kept secluded in it for six days. On the seventh day, the hut is pulled down and burnt by her maternal uncle. On that day, the girl is bathed with three pots of water and smeared with sandal paste and turmeric powder. On this occasion, *i.e. thiratti* or *pooppu neerattu vizha* or *sadangu kalyanam* the girl's maternal uncle gives her new clothes and others bring her gifts. The clothes that she wore during seclusion are given to a washerwoman. Five married women carry plates known as *seer thattu,* each one with flower garlands, coconut, jaggery and fruits. A feast is given to relatives.

During Koravar marriage negotiations, the presence of the maternal uncle is emphasised. If both parties agree to the alliance, they exchange *vethalai pakku* (betel leaves and arecanuts). Traditionally, *kallu* (toddy) or *sarayam* (arrack) was exchanged by the two parties. The bridegroom's parents give a token *parisam* or *pariyam* to the bride's parents to secure the girl. *Thamboolam, i.e.* plates containing coconuts, flowers, new clothes, fruits, cosmetics and sandalwood paste are also exchanged.

Traditionally, weddings were held at night. But nowadays, the Koravar look for an auspicious time during the day. The *nalungu* ceremony is held on the previous evening. On the marriage day, a peepul twig is tied to a pole and turmeric thread (*kanganam*) knotted around the twig. The *periyamanusan* or *arumaikkarar*, an elderly man, gives the *thali* to the bride-

groom, who ties it around the bride's neck. On the next day, a *veshti* (dhoti) is given to the bride's maternal uncle. Married women carry *seer thattu* with gifts from the bride's parents to their daughter.

Mention also must be made of a very old form of wedding which was prevalent among the Koravar about forty years ago. In southern Tamil Nadu, *i.e.* in Tiruchchirappalli District and in areas south of it, this wedding was known as *kai kotti kalyanam* (clapping-of-hands marriage). In northern Tamil Nadu, it was known as *kinni thattu kalyanam* (striking-the-plates marriage). It was a very simple wedding. After the two parties exchanged *monthai kallu* (toddy in a pot), the *arumaikarar* or *periyamanusan* gave the *karugumani* (black beads) or *thali bottu* to the bridegroom who tied it around the bride's neck. Those assembled went around the couple clapping their hands to solemnise the marriage. In northern Tamil Nadu, plates were struck. This is not in vogue at present. Widow remarriage is a simple affair. This is known as *nadu veettu kalyanam* and, in the presence of community members, the bridegroom ties the *thali bottu* or *karugumani* around the bride's neck.

The Koravar dead are usually buried. Only those who had committed suicide are cremated. The Koravar utilise the common burial ground. The Parayan, barber and washerman render their traditional services during the funeral rites. The eldest son is the chief mourner. He along with his *pangalis* (agnates) bring pots full of water and ceremonially bathes the corpse. New white cloth, brought by the *pangalis* and *maman machan* (the affinals), is spread over the body. The body is laid in the grave in a prone posture with the head and feet in the south-north configuration. The head is turned to face east. The chief mourner's head is shaved and a pot containing water is broken by him. He then puts the first handful of sand into the grave and is followed by others. If death occurs on a Saturday, a live chicken or toad is tied to the feet of the corpse and carried up to the burial ground; it is either sacrificed there, or set free. This is done to prevent their belief, that a death on a Saturday would be followed by another death, from coming true. Death pollution is observed for 16 days. On the 16th day, the *pangalis* take a purificatory bath. Before

the feast is served to them on the occasion, a few lumps of cooked rice are offered to the crows. Nowadays, some of the Koravar get a Brahman priest to do a purification (*punyavachanam*) ceremony.

The Koravar in rural areas pursue such occupations as basket-making, mat-weaving, making brooms and winnowing pans, rearing pigs and selling pork, fortune-telling, agricultural labour and wage labour. Some of them sell vegetables in the markets. Those in the cities and towns are employed in municipalities and government departments.

Basket-making is the traditional occupation of the Koravar and the materials required for this, bamboo and cane, are obtained from the forests or purchased in the markets. Some of them sell salt. Some of them were originally entrusted with patrolling the villages (*kavalkarar*) and were regularly paid in kind.

Traditional *kula panchayat* consisting of elderly male members existed among them in the past. Nowadays, the Koravar community elders in each place solve the intracommunity disputes. Sometimes, their community associations also settle their disputes. For major offences, they approach the local village panchayats and police stations.

The Koravar worship Murugan, Perumal and deities such as Mariamman, Maduraiveeran, Muneeswaran, Ayyanar, Angalamman and Karupparayan. They undertake pilgrimages to Tirupati, Palani, Madurai, Tirupparankundram and Tiruttani. They also worship their clan deities and ancestors. The clan gods are known as *kattuswamy* (forest gods) and are distinguished from *veettuswamy* (ancestors). The temples of clan deities are situated either in the forest or in a village nearby. Some of them are Angalamman, Gangaiamman, Mayavan, Per Devaru, Gobanathan, Poovadakari, Periyayi, Ayyanar, Marudha Veeran, Mariamman and Karuppannasami.

The Koravar propitiate the clan gods every year individually or as a clan. *Pattapoosari* is the priest of the forest god. Succession to this post is passed down in the same family.

The Koravar celebrate all the Hindu festivals. Their ancestors are worshipped during festival occasions, especially on Adi Pathinettu and Pongal. Once in a while they sacrifice a pig

to the clan gods on Adi Pathinettu to ensure clan welfare

The Koravar accept both cooked and uncooked food from all the communities. They share burial grounds, water sources, and other facilities with the village communities and utilise the services of the barber, washerman and the Parayan.

Most Koravar children assist their parents in their economic activities, so only a small number go to school. The Koravar make use of primary health centres, but for ordinary ailments they depend on native medicines. Many are ignorant of family planning methods. The Koravar have access to basic civic amenities.

V. Sudarsen
A. Xaviour Raj

Attur Kilnad Koravar

Attur Kilnad Koravar are a bamboo basket-making community found only in the Attur taluk of Salem District. The community has synonyms such as Dobba Koravar, Koravar and Kalyanattam Koravar. They speak Tamil and use the Tamil script.

The Attur Kilnad Koravar are nonvegetarians who eat pork. Rice, *ragi*, *colam* and *kambu* are the staple foods of the community. Groundnut oil is used for cooking. They consume milk and milk products and drink tea and coffee. They eat locally available leafy vegetables, roots and tubers and some fruit. Alcoholic drinks are consumed by both men and women. *Beedis* and cigarettes are smoked. They chew betel with tobacco. Some inhale snuff.

The community is divided into many exogamous social divisions (*kulam*), which are treated as the regulating factors of marriage. They are broadly divided into two categories, *viz.* *sahodara kulam* (brother's clan) and *mamamachan kulam* (brother-in-law clan). Members belonging to the same *kulam* are called *sahodara kulam*, whereas other *kulam* members are known as *mamamachan kulam*.

Cross-cousin (*i.e.* father's sister's daughter and mother's brother's daughter) marriages are common among the Attur Kilnad Kuravar. Uncle-niece marriages are also allowed. In the

past, child marriages were in vogue among them, but now only adult marriages take place. The mode of acquiring a mate is through elopement, exchange of sisters or negotiation. Monogamy is the norm. In the case of the death of a first wife or husband, the survivor can remarry. The *thali* is the symbol of marriage. In the past, *oli* (bride-price) was paid, but now it has been replaced by *varadakshinai* (dowry), which is paid both in cash and kind. The rule of residence is patrilocal and the rule of inheritance is patrilineal. Property is shared on the basis of male equigeniture. Divorce is allowed for both sexes on the grounds of adultery, barrenness, lack of male issue, cruelty and chronic disease. Widows, widowers, male and female divorcees are all allowed to remarry.

The nuclear family is the norm in the Attur Kilnad Koravar community. Extended families are steadily breaking up. There are no avoidance relationships. A joking relationship is observed between sister-in-law and brother-in-law and also between grandparents and grandchildren. Succession is through the eldest son.

Although the Attur Kilnad Koravar women work with their men, they are treated as inferior in the family. They contribute to the family income by agricultural labour. They have decision-making powers and control family expenditure. They have a major role in social and religious activities. They accompany their husbands when they go to collect honey. They rear pigs.

The predelivery ritual, *valaikappu* is performed by the Attur Kilnad Koravar, during the seventh or ninth month of a woman's first pregnancy. The women then goes to her natal home and usually the first delivery takes place there. *Sadangu* (birth ritual) is performed after eight days of pollution. The child is named on the same day. Tonsuring is performed, if they have made a vow to a deity.

A puberty ritual (*theraty*) is observed when an Attur Kilnad Koravar girl attains her first menarche. During this period she is secluded in a corner of the house. Pollution is observed for seven or eight days. The girl is formally allowed into the house after a purificatory ritual. A feast accompanied by liquor is arranged. The poor ignore this ritual.

Weddings among the Attur Kilnad Koravar are conducted over two days. On the first day, the bride's parents, along with

the bride, visit the bridegroom's house and certain rituals are performed. On the next day, the *muhurtham* is celebrated. The ritual is officiated at by the headman of their caste. The function is held in the bridegroom's home. The expenses of the wedding feast are equally shared by both parties. The consummation ceremony takes place at the girl's natal home.

The Attur Kilnad Koravar usually bury their dead. When the first child of a family dies, it is cremated due to the fear that its corpse may be used for magical rites by sorcerers. Death rituals are performed on the eighth day. *Ellam dukkam* (purificatory) ceremony is officiated at by their headman or by a Satani Brahman. Ancestor worship is observed by them annually and new clothes and food are offered to the deceased persons on this day.

The traditional occupation of the Attur Kilnad Koravar is basket-making. The raw material for this, bamboo, is collected from the nearby forests. As a susidiary occupation they rear pigs and collect honey. They have direct links with the market.

The Malai Koravan caste council exists at both village and State level. The headman (*thalaivar*) is selected by voice vote. The headman's post is honorary in nature. Cases such as adultery, rape and theft are settled by the council and cash fines are imposed on the defaulters. The penalty amount is spent for the welfare of the community.

The Attur Kilnad Koravar are Hindus and celebrate Deepavali, Dussehra, Sivaratri, Pongal, and Medalamma festivals. They visit sacred centres such as Tirupati, Madurai, Srirangam, Tiruttani and Kanchi.

The Attur Kilnad Koravar accept cooked food and water from communities such as the Vanniyar, Chettiar, Gounder, Mudaliar, Brahmam and Naicker. They share cremation grounds and drinking water sources with other communities.

The Attur Kilnad Koravar have a positive approach towards formal education. They favour indigenous and modern medicare. Women get sterilised after three children. They have access to civic amenities.

SHAIK ABDUL AZEEZ SAHEB

Attur Melnad Koravar

The Attur Melnad Koravar are a numerically small community, living in the hilly Kalyanattam area of Attur taluk, Salem District. They are also known as Talayari Kuravar. The traditional occupation of the community was robbery and theft. In 1974, the State government took major steps to rehabilitate them by providing free houses, free lands and free irrigational facilities. Since then they have been agriculturalists. They speak Tamil and use its script.

The Attur Melnad Koravar are nonvegetarians who eat pork. Rice, millets and *ragi* are their staple foods. They eat all pulses, vegetables, roots and tubers and some fruit. Groundnut oil is used for cooking. They drink tea, coffee and milk. Both men and women drink liquor. Smoking is common among them. They chew betel with tobacco. Inhaling snuff is rare.

The Attur Melnad Koravar are endogamous. Cross-cousin marriages are very common among them. So are uncle-niece marriages. In the past, pre-puberty marriages were common, but no longer. The modes of acquiring a mate is through negotiation or exchange of sisters in a family. Monogamy is the norm. The *metti* and *thali* are the symbols of marriage. The rule of residence is patrilocal and the rule of inheritance is patrilineal. *Oli* (bride-price) has been replaced by *varadhasan* (dowry).. *Thodara mureset* (divorce) is allowed with the headman's approval on grounds of adultery, lack of male issue and barrenness. Widows, widowers, male and female divorcees are allowed to remarry. Succession is through the eldest son in a family.

Nuclear families are on the rise among the Attur Melnad Koravar. Avoidance relationships exist between mother-in-law and son-in-law, father-in-law and daughter-in-law. A joking relationship is usually seen between grandparents and grandchildren. Male equigeniture is the rule of inheritance.

Attur Melnad Koravar women are treated as inferior to men. They mainly attend to domestic duties and agricultural work. They contribute to family income and control family expenditure. They have a role in social and religious activities.

Valaikappu, the pre-delivery ritual, is conducted by her parents during the seventh month of a Koravar woman's first pregnancy. The pregnant woman then goes to her natal home for delivery. *Sadangu* (birth ritual) is conducted on the eighth day after birth and the child is named on the same day.

Theraty, a puberty ritual, is observed when a girl attains menarche. Puberty pollution is observed for seven days during which time the girl is kept isolated within the house. She is allowed to resume normal activities after a purificatory ritual. A feast is arranged on the eighth day for all relatives.

An Attur Melnad Koravar marriage is conducted over a day. A Brahman priest officiates at the wedding. The wedding takes place at the bridegroom's house. The consummation ceremony is in the bride's natal home.

Death (*erappu*) rituals for the departed soul are performed by the Attur Melnad Koravar on the eighth day after the funeral. The dead are usually buried. But in the case of death of a firstborn, they cremate the corpse. *Ellam dukkam* (purificatory) rites for the dead are performed by a Satani Brahman priest. Ancestor worship is conducted annually on Mahalaya Amavasya day.

Since their rehabilitation in 1974, the Attur Melnad Koravar consider agriculture as their primary occupation. They cultivate paddy, cotton and sugarcane. Irrigation is mainly through dugwells and borewells provided by the Government.

The Attur Melnad Koravar community has a community council, the Malai Kuravar Sangam. It is headed by the *dharmakartha* elected by voice vote. He settles cases like adultery, theft, rape and disputes over land and water. Cash fines are collected from defaulters and spent on community feasts, village festivals and for the development of the community. The *dharmakartha* also acts as a priest during the Mariyamman and Karuppayya festivals.

The Attur Melnad Koravar are Hindus and celebrate Deepavali, Dussehra, Sivaratri, Pongal and Medalamma festivals. Madurai Veeran is their *kuladeivam.*

The Attur Melnad Koravar accept water and food from the Gounder, Naicker, Vanniyar, Padayachi, Mooper, Pillai and Brahman communities living in their vicinity. They do not take food and water from the Attur Kilnad Koravar and Scheduled

Castes. In the past, the Koravar were not allowed to enter the houses of the upper castes because they were considered thieves. This notion has now changed and they have cordial relations with all castes.

The Attur Melnad Koravar favour formal education for both boys and girls. They prefer to have four children, after which the women get sterilised. They have been given free land, irrigational facilities, chemical fertilisers and pesticides, bullocks, bullock carts and sheep loans by the Government. They have access to civic amenities.

SHAIK ABDUL AZEEZ SAHEB

Dobba Koravar

The Dobba Koravar are a subgroup of the Koravar caste cluster. They use *dabbai* (bamboo splints) for basketry and are, hence, called Dobba Koravar. However, nowadays, they refer to themselves as Malaikkuravan. They claim that they lived in the hills (*malai*) in the past. The Dobba Koravar are mainly found in the Salem, Tiruchchirappalli, Thanjavur and Pudukkottai districts. They speak Tamil and use its script. They also know their traditional dialect, Kuluvatha.

The Dobba Koravar are nonvegetarians, but do not eat beef or pork. Rice, *ragi* and millets are their staple foodgrains. They eat locally available pulses and vegetables, roots and tubers, and fruit. Groundnut oil is used for cooking. Men drink toddy and arrack. Smoking beedis, cigarettes and cheroots, chewing betel and tobacco, and using snuff arc common in the community.

The Dobba Koravar follow endogamy at the community level and exogamy at the *gotra* and clan level. Marital relations with other subgroups of the Koravar are permitted. Consanguineal marriages are common. So are uncle-niece marriages. Boys marry around 20 years of age and girls around 18. Marriages are arranged by the elders through negotiation. Monogamy is the marital norm. The *thali* and toe-rings are the marriage symbols. The custom of giving *parisam* exists in the community.

It is paid in cash. Dowry is given in kind. They follow the patrilocal rule of residence after marriage. Divorce is permitted with social approval on grounds of adultery. Either spouse can initiate divorce proceedings. Compensation is given to the aggrieved party. If it is the woman who seeks the divorce, she has to return the *parisam*. Widows, widowers, and divorcees of both sexes are allowed to remarry.

Both nuclear and extended families exist in the Dobba Koravar community. Joking relationships are permitted among brothers-in-law and between grandparents and grandchildren. All sons have equal shares in the ancestral property. The eldest son succeeds as head of the family.

The status of women in the Dobba Koravar community is low when compared to that of men. They participate in economic activities. They make baskets and brooms and market them. They participate in social functions and rituals.

The Dobba Koravar do not observe elaborate rituals for pregnant women. Usually, the pregnant woman is taken to her natal home during the seventh or ninth month of her first pregnancy. Before taking her to her natal home a simple *nalungu* is conducted at the husband's house. On that day, the pregnant woman is given bangles and a few eatables by her mother. The delivery is conducted at the woman's natal home with the help of a midwife. They observe birth pollution for 16 days. On the 16th day, both the mother and child are given ceremonial baths. The tonsuring and ear-boring ceremonies are held on the same day at the end of first year or during the third year.

Puberty rites (*poopu neerattu vizha*) are observed when a Dobba Koravar girl attains menarche. She is kept in seclusion for seven days. On the seventh day she is given a ceremonial bath. On the 16th day, a function is arranged in which she is given a sari and cosmetics by her maternal uncle. Prior to this function, *nalungu* is performed. A feast is arranged for the invitees.

Dobba Koravar marriages are arranged by elders through negotiation. When both the bride's and bridegroom's families agree to the alliance, the betrothal is conducted with the exchange of *vethalai pakku* (betel leaves and arecanuts) and date for the marriage is fixed. The wedding takes place at the

bride's home. *Nalungu* is conducted on the evening before the wedding. On the marriage day, a *peepul* twig is tied to a pole and a turmeric thread (*kanganam*) is knotted around it. The *periyamanusan*, an elderly person, gives the *thali* to the bridegroom who ties it around the neck of the bride. The consummation ceremony takes place at the bridegroom's home. Nowadays, they employ Brahman priests to officiate at the wedding.

The Dobba Koravar bury their dead. The eldest son performs the funeral rites. It is buried in a prone posture. Death pollution lasts for 16 days. On the 16th day, the relatives take a ceremonial bath, symbolically purifying themselves.

The traditional occupation of the Dobba Koravar community is basketry. Most of them pursue it even today. They work as agricultural labourers, and daily wage casual labourers. A few are employed in government service in lower cadres. Landlessness has caused a rise in the number of daily wage casual labourers and agricultural labourers.

The traditional *kula panchayat* exists among the Dobba Koravar. Elderly persons of the community form the members of the panchayat. The panchayat disposes of their disputes and offences. It has powers to sanction divorce. They have a caste association to look after the general welfare of the community.

The Dobba Koravar worship Ayyanar, Muneeswaran, Madurai Veeran, Murugan and Perumal. They celebrate Deepavali, Pongal and Karthigai.

The Dobba Koravar have an oral tradition. Folk-songs are sung by them on festive occasions. They perform traditional dances such as *kolattam* and *kummi*.

The Dobba Koravar accept water and cooked food from the communities such as the Mudaliar, Pillai, Vanniyar, Padaiyachi and Gounder. They do not accept water and cooked food from the Pallan, Parayan and Chakkiliyan. They take the services of the barber and washerman. They maintain landlord-tenant and cultivator-labour relationships.

The Dobba Koravar send their children to school, but many drop out due to economic and social reasons. They use both indigenous and modern medicare. They have access to civic amenities.

D. XAVIOUR

Gandharvakottai Koravar

The Gandharvakottai Koravar get their name from their village, Gandharvakottai in Pudukkottai district. The community is also known as Inji Kuravar and Munji Kuravar. They are called Munji Kuravar because they also know the technique of *munji koodai* (bamboo basket). Nowadays, they have formed a Malai Kuravan Association at the State level and are fighting to get the Scheduled Tribe status of the Malai Kuravan for themselves. They generally camp at street corners and near markets in urban areas. They speak a dialect known as Koravabhasha. Koravabhasha, however, is spoken only by the elders, and for private conversations. The young speak Tamil at home and outside and use the Tamil script.

The Gandharvakottai Koravar are nonvegetarians who eat pork. *Ragi* and rice are their staple foods. They eat all available pulses, vegetables, roots and tubers. Groundnut and gingelly oils are used for cooking. They drink tea, coffee and milk. Both men and women drink *sarayam* (arrack). *Beedi*- and cigarette-smoking is common among them. Betel-chewing with tobacco is common. Snuff is rarely used.

The Gandharvakottai Koravar has the same *kulams* (clans) as that of other Koravan communities. These *kulams* are exogamous and marriage within the same *kulam* is prohibited. Marriages are negotiated with an *uramorangar* (brother-in-law) *kulam*. Mother's brother's daughter and father's sister's daughter and eldest sister's daughter are the most common marriage alliances. Marriages are settled by negotiation. Monogamy is the marital norm. The age at marriage for boys is 25 and for girls it is 20. *Metti* and *mangalasutra* are the symbols of a married woman. *Parisam* (bride-price) was paid in the past. It has now been replaced by *varadakshinai* (dowry). The rule of residence is patrilocal and the rule of inheritance patrilineal. *Thodara mureset* (divorce) is sanctioned with the approval of the headman of the community, on grounds of adultery, lack of male issue, barrenness, cruelty and maladjustment. Widows, widowers, male and female divorcees are allowed to remarry.

The Gandharvakottai Koravar usually live in nuclear families. Avoidance relationships exist between mother-in-law and son-

in-law and father-in-law and daughter-in-law. Joking relationships exist between grandparents and grandchildren. Property is shared on the basis of male equigeniture. The eldest son succeeds as head of a family.

The Gandharvakottai Koravar women have decision-making powers and control family expenditure. They mainly do domestic work, but also contribute to the family income by making palm leaf pond baskets. They participate in social and religious activities.

Valaikappu, the pre-delivery ritual, is conducted by the Gandharvakottai Koravar during the seventh or ninth month of a woman's first pregnancy. After the ritual, the woman is ceremonially sent to her natal home for the delivery. The purificatory ritual, is conducted on the 16th day after child birth. On that day, both the child and its mother are given baths and a feast is arranged for relatives and neighbours. The naming ceremony, is performed on the same day.

The Gandharvakottai Koravar celebrate a girl's puberty, *vantha,* after a pollution period of 15-22 days. The girl returns to normal routine on the 23rd day, after a purificatory ceremony. A feast is arranged for relatives and friends.

A Gandharvakottai Koravar *kalyanam* (marriage) is generally conducted within a day. The headman officiates on this occasion. The ceremony is usually conducted either at the bride's home or in a public hall. The expenses of the wedding feast are equally shared by the families. The consummation ceremony is arranged at the bride's natal home.

The Gandharvakottai Koravar bury their dead. They perform the death rites, *karumathi,* for the departed soul. The grave is traditionally dug by a Scheduled Caste person. While carrying the corpse to the burial ground, folk-songs are sung. Death rites are conducted on the 16th and 30th day. The dead are remembered on Mahalaya Amavasya day, annually.

The traditional occupation of the Gandharvakottai Koravar community is making baskets from palm leaf pond or bamboo splints. In rural areas, they work as agricultural labourers during the rainy season, when there is less demand for their goods and the raw material is difficult to collect. They have direct access to the market, and they deal in cash and kind.

The Malai Kuravar Association operates at the State as well as at the village level. The association is headed by a headman (*thalaivar*). His selection is made by voice vote. He discharges such duties as settling cases of theft, adultery and rape. The defaulters are fined in cash and this amount is utilised for the betterment of the community. They also discuss politics and decisions are taken as to which political party or candidate the community should vote for.

The Gandharvakottai Koravar are Hindus and celebrate Adi Krithigai, Mahalaya Amavasya, Dussehra, Deepavali, Pongal, Sivaratri and Tamil New Year's Day.

The Gandharvakottai Koravar accept cooked food and water from the Kallar, Oddar, Muthuraj, Chettiar and Brahman castes, but do not accept water and food from the Adi Dravidar, Arundathiyar and Chakkiliyan. They share burial grounds and water resources with other communities. There are also political leaders at the village and State levels.

The Gandharvakottai Koravar educate their sons upto college level and daughters upto secondary school. Boys drop out of school due to economic reasons and girls for social reasons. They have large families and do not seem to adopt family planning. They have access to civic amenities.

SHAIK ABDUL AZEEZ SAHEB

Koodai Koravar

The Koodai Koravar also call themselves Koravar. The Koodai Koravar, whose main occupation is basket (*koodai*) making and selling, are mainly found in the North Arcot Ambedkar, South Arcot, Salem and Dharmapuri districts.

The Koodai Koravar are nonvegetarians, who do not eat beef but eat pork. Their staple food is rice, supplemented by *ragi* and millets. They consume all varieties of pulses, vegetables, roots and fruit. They use groundnut and gingelly oils for cooking. They drink tea and coffee, and both men and women are habituated to alcoholic drinks such as *sarayam* (arrack) and *kallu* (toddy).

The Koodai Koravar have several *gotras* such as the Vysyala *gotra*, Dandibera *gotra*, Karavadi *gotra* and Mendrakutti *gotra*.

The Koodai Koravar are an endogamous group. Consanguineous marriages are predominant in this community, the common types being marriage to one's sister's daughter, maternal uncle's daughter or paternal aunt's daughter. Child marriage was earlier practised. Nowadays, girls marry between 16 and 18 and boys between 18 and 20.

Most Koodai Koravar are monogamous. Polygamy is allowed in case the first wife is barren. Marriage by exchange and elopement exist. Bride-price (*pariyam panam*) is given by the bridegroom to the bride's father. They follow the patrilocal rule of residence after marriage.

Divorce is permitted, with the consent of *ooru kattupadu* (village council). Either spouse can initiate divorce. A divorced woman can marry any man within the Koodai Koravar community. If the first wife wants to live with her husband he cannot divorce her by force; in fact, he has to give her half his property. Similarly, when a woman asks for divorce without sufficient reasons, she has to pay back the marriage expenses. If a married woman elopes with another person, she has to pay 100 *varams* (one *varam* is equal to four rupees) and the marriage expenses, as fixed by the panchayat, to her husband. Widows are allowed to remarry.

One of the main features of the Koodai Koravar community is the predominance of nuclear families. Joint families are very rare now. Joking relationships are permitted between consanguineal and affinal relations. All sons have equal rights over their ancestral property.

Koodai Koravar women have a lower status than their men. They do not have rights over their parental property. Most women are engaged in basket-making and make a major contribution to the family income.

The Koodai Koravar do not observe any pre-delivery rituals for the pregnant woman (*muruvodi*). She is taken to her natal home for her first delivery, either during the seventh or ninth month. Most of them deliver their children at home, with the help of an experienced *thai* (midwife). Only a few go to hospitals. Delivery entails pollution for nine days. On the ninth day, a purificatory ceremony (*purudu*) is performed. On the

same day, the child is named, either after grandparents or deities. Tonsuring is performed for both male and female children, at the age of one or three. This ceremony is performed at the temple of Lord Muneeswaran. They sacrifice a goat or fowl on this day. A nonvegetarian feast is served to all relatives and friends.

Puberty rites are performed for Koodai Koravar girls, when they attain menarche. The girl is kept in seclusion in a *gudisai* (hut) made of coconut leaves. Puberty pollution lasts for seven to nine days. On the seventh or ninth day, *manjal neerattu vizha* is performed. On this day, the girl's maternal uncle presents two sets of new clothes to her.

Marriage (*kannalam*), among the Koodai Koravar, is preceded by a betrothal ceremony (*pariyam podarathu*). This finalises the alliance. The bride-price is paid to the bride along with a sari and blouse. The *peridandakaran* officiates at the wedding. The main ritual is the tying of the *thali*. The *thali* consists of a piece of turmeric tied on a turmeric-stained thread. The more affluent use a gold pendant instead of the turmeric piece. A vegetarian feast is given, along with liquor, to all relatives and friends.

The Koodai Koravar dispose of the dead (*ponam*) on the day of the death, or on the next day. A firstborn is cremated, others are buried. Death entails pollution for 15 or 16 days. The *pal* ceremony is performed on the next day. To terminate pollution, *periyakarumathi* is performed on the 15th or 16th day. A nonvegetarian feast is served, along with liquor.

Basket (*koodai*) making is the traditional occupation of the Koodai Koravar. Some of them have taken up daily wage labour, drive cycle-rickshaws or do agricultural labour. They are paid in cash. Nowadays they have to purchase bamboos from the contractors and the price of *mungil* (bamboos) has gone up. Some Koodai Koravar who are not able to afford such prices have changed their occupation to pedalling cycle-rickshaws or agricultural labour. Most of them are no longer nomads and are trying to settle down.

The Koodai Koravar have a caste panchayat. *Peridanakaran* or *oorgounder* is their head. The *nattamaikaran* is second in position, and assists the *peridanakaran*. These posts are hereditary. The final verdict is delivered by the *peridanakaran* who

also gives reasons for his decision. The verdict is binding on both parties. A person who disobeys his verdict is excommunicated. The fine amount is called *varai panam*. The amount which is collected from the offenders is spent on religious activities in the village. Some amount will be spent on liquor for the village council during their deliberations.

The Koodai Koravar are ardent devotees of Sakthi (Amman). Most of them worship Muneeswaran as their family deity. They also worship Mariamman, Gangamman and Muthyalamman. They perform festivals for their deities annually. For the festival of the Goddess Muthumariamman, the deity is represented by a pile of pots called *karagam,* decorated with flowers and garlands, and taken out in procession through all the streets of the village. Animals are sacrificed. They celebrate Pongal, Mattu Pongal, Krithigai and Deepavali.

The Koodai Koravar share water sources and burial grounds with other communities.

The Koodai Koravar, especially those in urban areas, have access to all modern civic amenities. A considerable number of them have got free houses under the slum clearance scheme of the Tamil Nadu Government. Some of them have got loans to purchase bamboo for basket-making and for the purchase of cycle-rickshaws.

T.S. NAIDU

Ponnai Koravar

The Ponnai Koravar are found in Ponnai, North Arcot Ambedkar district. They are also called Uppu Koravar, Uppu Yerukulollu, Koravar and Karevepaku Koravar. They speak Telugu at home and Tamil with outsiders.

The Ponnai Koravar are nonvegetarians who abstain from eating beef but eat pork. Rice, *ragi* and millets are their staple foods. They eat all available pulses, vegetables and fruit. Groundnut and gingelly oils are used for cooking. Both men and women drink *sarai* (arrack). Tea, coffee, milk and milk products are consumed by them. They smoke *beedis* and cigarettes. They chew tobacco with betel leaves. They use snuff.

The Ponnai Koravar community has three *gotras*, *viz.* Sathapadi, Menpadi and Mendrakutti. These are further subdivided into exogamous surname (*intiperlu*) divisions such as Upparollu, Rachabottollu, Devarollu and Pandulollu. Marriages among same surname group and *gotra* are prohibited.

Surname and *gotra* exogamy is the rule of marriage among the Ponnai Koravar. In the past, pre-puberty marriages were in vogue but not now. The age at marriage for boys now is between 20 and 22 years and for girls between 18 and 20. Consanguineous marriages are allowed. Acquiring a mate is generally through negotiation. The *thali* and *metti* are the symbols of marriage. In the past, *oli* was paid, but it has now been replaced by *katnam* (dowry), which is paid in cash and kind. The rule of residence is patrilocal and the rule of descent is patrilineal. Property is shared equally among the sons. Divorce is allowed, on grounds of adultery, barrenness, lack of male issue and impotency. Widows, widowers, male and female divorcees are allowed to remarry.

The Ponnai Koravar live in nuclear families. Avoidance relationships are seen between mother-in-law and son-in-law, father-in-law and daughter-in-law. Joking relationships are common among grandparents and grandchildren, eldest sister's husband and wife's younger sisters. Succession is through the eldest son.

Ponnai Koravar women are very industrious and are treated as equal to their men. They attend to the economic activities such as fortune-telling, tattooing and selling salt. They have major roles in social and religious activities.

Seemantham, the pre-delivery ritual, is observed for the pregnant Ponnai Koravar woman during the seventh or ninth month of her pregnancy. This ritual is conducted at her husband's residence. She is then sent to her natal home where the first delivery is usually conducted. No birth pollution is observed by them nor are naming and tonsuring ceremonies conducted.

The Ponnai Koravar observe puberty rites, when a girl attains menarche. The girl is isolated for seven days in a separate hut erected for the purpose. On the last day she is given a purificatory bath and allowed into the house. A feast is arranged for all relatives and friends.

In the Ponnai Koravar weddings (*kalyanam*), the maternal uncle plays an important role. Wedding rituals, include *gajulu metti cattadam* (adorning the bride with bangles and toe-rings), *ethurpuvakil* (constructing new huts for the wedded couple) and *muhurtham* (wedding ceremony). The marriage is conducted at the bridegroom's home. The *shobanam* (consummation ceremony) takes place at the bride's natal home.

The dead among the Ponnai Koravar are buried. Death pollution is observed for 11 days. A Sattani Brahman officiates at the death rites.

The primary occupation of the Ponnai Koravar community is selling salt (*uppu*). They purchase salt from wholesale merchants and pay them after retailing the salt in the villages. They carry the salt either as head loads or on donkeys or bicycles. They deal in cash and kind. Salt is mainly sold by the men while the women engage in such activities as *pachchapoyadam* (tattooing) and *karivepaku ammadan* (selling coriander leaves). Some of them work as agricultural labourers.

There is no traditional caste council among the Ponnai Koravar. Disputes and cases of theft and adultery are settled with the help of elders.

The Ponnai Koravar are Hindus. Mallemma is their family deity. Venkanna is the community deity. Their oral tradition, in Telugu, survives. The folk-songs are sung by the women.

The Ponnai Koravar accept food and water from the Reddy, Naidu, Vanniyar, Balija, Vysya and Brahman but not from the Scheduled Castes. They share burial grounds with other communities.

The Ponnai Koravar boys and girls are sent to school. Many drop out due to economic or social reasons. They have access to civic amenities. They have benefited by the free housing schemes provided by the government.

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KOTA

The Kota are a Scheduled Tribe of Tamil Nadu. According to the 1961 Census, their total population was 1112 distributed in seven villages of the Nilgiris district, while the 1981 Census shows it to be 1300, indicating a low population growth.

Thurston (1909) says that "the Kotas were formerly one with the Todas, with whom they tended the herds of buffaloes in common. But, on one occasion they were found to be eating the flesh of a buffalo which had died, and the Todas drove them out as being eaters of carrion". Verghese (1974) mentions that, "according to a Kota legend, the Kota, the Toda and the Kurumba were real brothers and that they were the earliest inhabitants of the Nilgiri Hills. These three, as the legend goes, were created from three drops of God's (*kambatraya*) perspiration. Their seperation took place when God once asked them what they wanted. One of them said, 'Give me talent in arts' and he became a Kota, who later proved to be an able blacksmith, musician, hunter, potter, rope- and umbrella-maker. Another said, 'Give me buffaloes who can be my friend, relative and saviour' and he became a Toda dairy-man; 'Give me the power to destroy those whom I do not like', said the third brother who became a Kurumba, said to possess powers of sorcery and black magic which the other two dreaded".

The Kota speak Kota, a Dravidian language among themselves and Tamil with others.

The Kota are characterised by their short to medium stature, dolichocephelic head with leptoprosopic to mesoprosopic faces, messorrhine nose, flat wavy to broad wavy hair, slight imperceptible browridges, shallow to medium nasal depression and medium occipital protrusion (Basu and Gupta, 1962). The mean height of the males is 1613.11 mm and that of the females is 1491.56 mm which is 92 per cent of the male height. The mean sitting height is 839.89 mm for males and 777.64 mm for females.

The available data on serological and biochemical genetic markers reveal that the Kota are characterised by a high frequency of B gene and absence of A gene in A B O blood

groups (Sarkar, 1959; Lehman and Cutbush, 1952) had reported only two chromosomes, *viz.* c D e (0.8571) and c D e (0.1429) in Rh-Hr (Lehman and Cutbush, 1952). The frequency of Hp^1 allele is low (0.0909) in Haptoglobin (Kirk *et al.*, 1962). In general, the Kota differ markedly from other South Indian populations.

The Kota are nonvegetarians, who eat buffalo meat but not pork. Their staple food items are millets, rice and pulses. They consume all available alcoholic drinks. They are slowly giving up eating buffalo meat, to uplift their social status, as they were boycotted by the Badaga and considered an unclean and inferior group (Verghese, 1974).

Keri (clan) organisation is found among the Kota. *Keri* literally means 'street'. The following table gives the *keri* names in six out of the seven Kota villages. (Verghese, 1974).

Name of the village	*Names of* keri		
Aggal Kotagiri	Kiker	Naduker	Meker
Kil Kotagiri	-do-	-do-	-do-
Kundala Kotagiri	Amirker	-do-	-do-
Sholur Kotagiri	-do-	-do-	-do-
Kollimalai	Korekar	-do-	Gager
Trichagadi	-do-	Pibberker	Aker

Mandelbaum (1934) calls each *keri* the seat of a patrilineal clan. Though exceptions may be cited with regard to the residence of a number of members of a particular *keri,* houses of other *keri's,* it is to call each *keri* of each village as a clan independent of others. A man's *keri* is determined by birth, irrespective of where he may live. Change of residence, however, does not alter his alliance to the *keri* into which he was born. *Keri* descent is unilineal in the male line and all the members of a *keri* regard one another as kinsfolk.

At certain times, all the Kota families of a clan act as a unit, and perform certain rituals together. Verghese (1974) mentions that "following a death, the responsiblity of feeding the entire gathering to the funerary ceremonies falls on the clan members of the deceased. A man seeks material support first from his father, in whose absence, the members of his lineage and then of his clan. When one organises a *kabhulm* (taking help from neighbours during agricultural operations), the first

persons who should be invited are those of one's clan. Whatever the nature of *kabhulm* may be, all the members of one's clan are to be fed. When a family shifts to a newly built house, the clansmen provide grain sufficient to last the family for a month or so."

Among the Kota, marrying a girl from a man's own *keri*, is strictly prohibited. However, they practise both types of cross-cousin marriages (father's sister's daughter and mother's brother's daughter). They prefer to marry within their own village.

The marriageable age for girls and boys are 12-18 and 16-24 years respectively. Pre-puberty marriages are uncommon. Polygyny is permitted. Divorce (*vidth* or *vids*) is also allowed. Both levirate and sororate are practised, but they occur infrequently. According to Rivers, "polyandry implies certain privileges of leviration. On the death of a brother, the other has the first right over the widow" (Kapadia, 1959). Polygyny is permitted because of several socioeconomic reasons. The reasons according to Verghese (1968) are, (i) significant contribution of women to the subsistence of the family and the realisation by men of their economic importance; (ii) females outnumber males in their relative strength; (iii) desire to multiply their population; and (iv) presence of a good number of widows living in independent households.

Both nuclear and joint families exist among the Kota. The father or husband is the head of the family. Being patrilineal, inheritance of property is by male equigeniture and daughters have no rights over parental property. The eldest son succeeds as the head after his father's death.

The Kota women have a status secondary to their men, though they participate in all activities along with their men. A women can seek *vids* (divorce) at any stage of their married life. There is no social stigma attached to a woman for the number of *vids* she might have sought earlier. A divorced woman has no right over her children, and they live with their father.

The pregnant Kota woman (*vittach singlow*) delivers her child at the *therul* (seclusion hut). The naming ceremony is performed after the next *amavasya* (new moon day). *Mandmavabordo* (tonsuring) and *kevikuthukojas* (ear-boring) ceremonies takes

place when the child is four. Puberty pollution for girls lasts for five days. The Kota girl is kept in the *therul* for four days. On the fifth day, she is given a bath, and served food prepared with jaggery, rice and coconut.

Marriages among the Kota are of two types, arranged and by elopement. In the arranged type, a boy selects a mate and informs his parents of his desire to marry her. The courtship lasts for any period, but neither parents nor villagers condemn it. Exceptions to marriage by courtship, though infrequent, are not uncommon. Verghese (1974) mentions that "when a priest is divorced by his wife, he is at liberty to announce, in public, a woman of his choice and the villagers see to it that she is married to him". Infrequently a young woman may be forced by her parents to marry a rich old man who has no legal heir.

Marriage by elopement is also not uncommon among the Kota. A man takes a woman to his house either by force or enticement for a night or more and has the right to claim a wedded relationship with her. If a married Kota woman elopes, her aggrieved husband has to be paid double the amount of *kattupanam* (bride-price) within three months. If this is not paid, he takes the case to the *koot* (council) for justice.

A dead body is called *thab* by the Kota. It is cremated at the *dhooli* (cremation ground). The corpse is clad in new clothes and carried on a *kattil* (bier) to the funeral ground. Here, two bulls are made to go around it three times, anti-clockwise. Then the right hand of the corpse is made to touch one of the horns of one bull, and the left hand the tail of the other bull. Men pay their last homage to the departed and drop the *vaikkarisi* (funeral rice) on the corpse's mouth. The eldest son lights the pyre. After the cremation, the bones are collected in a pot and buried near the cremation area. A stone is erected on it for identification. The four persons who carry the corpse to the cremation ground have to stay in *kila veedu* (a house outside the village). Death entails pollution for eight days.

Agriculture is the major occupation of most of the Kota. They grow potato, *ragi* and vegetables. They also run private dairies and sell the milk to cooperative societies.

The Kota have a local village organisation as well their own

council known as *koot*. The head of the *koot* is called *guttakaran*. The *terkaran* (priest) plays an important role in strengthening the *koot*. The head of the household refers a dispute to the *guttakaran*. The *guttakaran*, in consultation with the clan heads, fixes the date and time for the council meeting. At the meeting, the culprit has to swear in the name of *kolavalkal* (family deity) and give his version of the complaint lodged against him. If found guilty and irresponsible, he is liable for excommunication for at least five years.

The Kota are Hindus. They worship not only their own gods but also others from the Hindu pantheon. Their family deities are Kambatrayan and Kambateswari, whose temples are seen in every village. The emblem of bow and arrow, representing the deities, can be seen atop all these temples. The Kota consider Kambatrayan as their chief and traditional deity. Every year the Kota celebrate the Kambatrayan and Kambateswari festivals in January. The festival lasts for 13 days. The festival begins on the Monday following the appearance of the crescent moon. The Kota consider as auspicious the Monday that follows the first appearance of the crescent moon of each month. They lay emphasis on the crescent moon because they consider the New Moon Day as the day of the spirits of the dead.

The Kota believe that Kambateswari is the Goddess of Crops and Kambatrayan the God of Rains. In honour of Kambateswari they celebrate a harvest festival known as *velity sastran* on a Tuesday in the month of July. They also worship the Rain God Kambatrayan annually in the month of June-July. On this occasion, all the men go to an open ground in a procession and dance. Apart from these deities, they worship Krishna, Lakshmi and Saraswati.

The relationship of the Kota with other communities, such as the Badaga, Toda and Kurumba, are cordial. They consider the Badaga and Toda as higher in the social hierarchy, and claim equal status with the Kurumba. They accept food from the Badaga, Toda and Kurumba. However, the Badaga, Toda, and Kurumba do not take cooked food from the Kota.

Under the tribal developmental programme, the Kota of Trichagadi were given one acre of *patta* land. Fifty houses were also constructed for them. About twenty of these houses were

given electricity free of charge. They are provided with protected water through a pipeline. Fifty families obtained cows free of cost. They also received agricultural implements, fertilisers, seedlings on subsidy and free of cost to help them with their farming. Essential commodities are supplied to them through the Girijan Cooperative Society. There is a tribal residential school upto the fifth standard. For high school they have to go to Tumeni, four kilometres away.

The most perceptible change among the Kota can be noticed in the sphere of public health due to the introduction of a primary health centre. This medical unit has contributed to the improvement in health and hygiene among the Kota by providing modern medicines to the ailing. They are aware of family planning methods.

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KRISHNAVAKA

The Krishnavaka are also referred to as Krishnavaga, Krishna Kshatriya Kurup and Pannaiyar. The men used the titles Pillay or Pillai as suffixes to their names. The name Krishna refers to Lord Krishna and *vaka* means 'property'. The oral tradition, as recorded, indicates that Lord Krishna and the people of Krishnavaka together developed Dwaraka in Gujarat. Later, at Lord Krishna's direction, they migrated to the south with the Ambadi Krishna idol. King Udayavarma Martanda of Thiruvananthapuram named the community, Krishnavaka. They constructed a Krishna temple in the south and became worshippers of Krishna. The Tamil term *kurup* means 'a battalion', and the Krishnavaka served in the army of King Udayavarma Martanda. The community is therefore popularly known as Kurup. The community has two subgroups, *viz.* Makkavali and Marumakkavali or Marumakkatayam. In the Makkavali subgroups, the property used to be shared by the sons, while among the Marumakkavali the property went to the nephew or son-in-law. However, there are no such differences between the groups now.

There are different tales regarding the origin of the two subgroups in the Krishnavaka community. It is narrated that, once upon a time, a king by name Balarama Varma had two sons (Papputambi and Ramantambi) and one daughter (Vammanithangai). As the sons were not fit to rule, the king thought of giving the kingdom to his nephew Udayavarma and arranged the marriage of his daughter to his nephew. But his sons opposed their father's idea and declared war against Udayavarma. The people supported Udayavarma. In the battle, Udayavarma killed both his brothers-in-law and their supporters. Later, he succeeded Balarama Varma. Thereafter, the *marumakkavali* rule of inheritance (property goes to the nephew) came into existence in the kingdom. Others also adopted the custom and the Marumakkavali became a separate group in the community, while those who continued with the original rule of male equigeniture, Makkavali, remained a separate group. Another story says that, long ago, there were two kingdoms, to the south (*tekkam*) and north (*vadakkam*) of the

Pampa river. The Tekkamcoor raja married the sister of the Vadakkamcoor raja. After sometime, the Tekkamcoor raja was blessed with a son. When the boy was very young, the king, his family and his people fled Tekkamcoor to escape a flood. But even as they were crossing the Pampa river, the floodwaters washed them away and killed everyone except the young prince and an elderly man. The Vadakamcoor king, hearing of the news, searched for the young prince, his nephew, and, later, gave him his daughter in marriage, as well as his kingdom. Others of the Krishnavaka group followed his example and settled their properties on their nephews (*marumakkavali*). Yet another story narrates that long ago, the Krishnavaka people lived in Ayodhya as Kshatriyas. There came a time when Udayavarma Martanda felt his kingdom was threatened and he was looking for additional security. Lord Padmanabhaswamy appeared in his Krishna incarnation before the King in a dream and suggested that he get the Krishna Kshatriya from Ayodhya to protect his kingdom. Accordingly, Udayavarma recruited 72 male members of the Krishna Kshatriya for security. He built a Krishna temple for the Krishnavaka, appointed two of them as priests and constituted the other 70 as a battalion in his army. All of them later settled in the country at Udayavarma Maharaja's request and married local women. Some of these accepted the *marumakkavali* system already in practice here. Others, who married Vellala and Chakkala women, followed the *makkavali* system as was practised by the Vellala and Chakkala communities.

The Krishnavaka are distributed in the Kalkulam and Vilvamkod taluks of Kanniyakumari district. Both the Makkavali and Marumakkavali groups inhabit the same localities. According to them, the Makkavali are slightly more numerous. The Makkavali speak a dialect, which is a mixture of Malayalam and Tamil, among themselves, while the Marumakkavali speak pure Malayalam among themselves. Both groups speak Malayalam and Tamil with outsiders. Some families of both groups use the Malayalam script, while others use the Tamil script. In the past, the Makkavalli women wore the *chela* (sari), while the Marumakkavali women wore the *moundan kavani'* (*mundu*) similar to the Nayar.

The Krishnavaka are nonvegetarians, but do not eat beef or pork. Their staple food is rice. They eat all varieties of vegetables, fruits and pulses. They mostly use coconut oil for cooking. The men drink liquor and smoke *beedis* and cigarettes. They consume milk and milk products. Both men and women chew betel. A few of them use snuff.

Each of the two Krishnavaka subgroups is an endogamous group and is divided into different lineages or surnames. There are 72 exogamous patrilineal surnames (*veettuperu*). The surnames regulate marriage alliances. They consider themselves Kshatriyas in the *varna* order. The community considers the Vellalar and Chetti equal to them in social status.

The Krishnavaka follow subgroup endogamy and surname exogamy. Consanguineous marriages are common. Uncle-niece marriages are not socially permitted. Levirate, junior and senior, is permitted in the Makkavali group. The woman selects one among her deceased husband's brothers and lives with him. But in the Marumakkavali group, a widow can remarry. The age at marriage for men is between 21 and 27 years, while it is between 18 and 25 for women. Monogamy is the norm, but polygyny is allowed. The symbol of marriage is the *thali*. The Makkavali group also wear *metti* as a marriage symbol. The type and form of *thali* differs between the two subgroups. An image of Lord Krishna playing the flute is usually engraved on the *thali*. In the past, the Makkavali used a turmeric-stained thread to string on the *thali* while the Marumakkavali used a gold chain. The Makkavali group tie the *thali* closely to the neck while Marumakkavali tie it loosely. Both groups now use gold chains. Since olden times, dowry has been paid in this community (*sridhana*). In the past, the Makkavali practised the patrilocal rule of residence, while the Marumakkavali practised the avunculocal rule of residence. Both groups now follow the patrilocal rule of residence. In the past, only the eldest son among the Makkavali got married and all other sons used to be bachelors, but now all the sons get married. Traditionally, divorce was not allowed. But nowadays divorce is allowed and divorcees are allowed to remarry. Widowers and widows are also allowed to remarry, though in the past widows had not been allowed to remarry.

The vertically extended family is more common among the Makkavali whereas families are either nuclear or mixed-extended among the Marumakkavali. Joking relationships exist between sisters-in-law, brothers-in-law and grandparents and grandchildren. Traditionally, the rule of inheritance was through male equigeniture among the Makkavali, whereas the property would be shared by a person's sister's children among the Marumakkavali. The Marumakkavali male gets shares of the property through his wife from her maternal uncle. Both the groups now follow equigeniture rule of inheritance and succession is by the eldest son. Daughters get an equal share of the property.

Krishnavaka women have a role in religious and social activities. They participate in agricultural operations. Some of the women help their men in running sweet shops and other petty businesses. Some educated women are employed in the government and public sectors. Some women prepare and sell *avil* (poached rice and puffed rice). The Krishnavaka women's contribution to the family income is substantial. Women have no powers in decision-making.

The Krishnavaka conduct a pre-delivery ritual called *chulu alaipu* in the fifth, seventh or ninth month of a woman's first pregnancy. It is conducted at the pregnant woman's in-laws house. The pregnant woman's mother gives her new bangles and clothes. Among the Makkavali, the pregnant woman's mother-in-law gives her a piece of cloth and a vessel of *vurukkana* (coconut oil extracted from raw coconut) at the time of *chulu alaipu*. Among the Marumakkavali, the pregnant woman's mother-in-law gives her *ekalkoda* (seven varieties of sweets). The pregnant woman is taken to her natal home for the delivery. Most women now go to hospitals to have childbirth. They observe birth pollution for 16 days. They also conduct *panda suddi* (cleaning of vessels). On the 16th day, a ceremonial bath is given to the mother and child and then the mother is allowed into the kitchen. Among the Marumakkavali, the child's father comes on the 18th day to conduct *aranjalam* when he ties a girdle around his child's waist. The same ritual is conducted on the 28th day among the Makkavali. The Makkavali call it *eruvattiettu kattu*. They name the child on the day of

aranjalam or *eruvattiettu kattu.* The Krishnavaka conduct the tonsuring ceremony for children at a temple, when the child is one. On the same day, they pierce the ears if it is a girl.

The Krishnavaka observe puberty rites when a girl attains menarche. The girl's *mami* (father's sister's daughter) pours turmeric water on her head. Later, the girl takes a bath and is kept in seclusion for 16 days. They conduct *gruhasuddi* (purificatory ritual for the house) on the 16th day. That evening, a small function called *sadangu* is conducted. Only women participate in this function.

Marriages are fixed by negotiation among the Krishnavaka. In the past, marriages used to be celebrated for seven days, but now a wedding is over in a few hours. A plantain stem with a twig of the *muruku* tree is stood in the middle of the wedding dais. At the bottom of the plantain stem some soil is placed. At the time of the wedding, they keep an earthen pot with live coals in it. In that, *sambaram* powder (incense) is sprinkled to create an aromatic smoke (*munduchuduvalu*). A Brahman priest officiates at the marriage. The bride and bridegroom go three times around the marriage platform, accompanied by the bride's brothers and the bridegroom's sisters. One sister of the bridegroom carries a *nazhi* (a measure) full of paddy in one hand and a lamp in the other. The priest or the maternal uncle then puts an iron *kappu* (bracelet) on the wrists of the bridegroom and bride. The *kappu* is expected to ward off evil spirits. The bridegroom's sister now hands over the *thali* to the bridegroom. The bridegroom puts it around the neck of the bride and it is tied by the bridegroom's sister. The couple are then given milk, fruits and sweets. The bride's maternal uncle puts a *panavola* (a dish made of palm leaf) in the hands of the couple. He conducts *dharavarthu kuduppathu* on the marriage platform. He places a little soil (from the bottom of the plantain stem) and pours water from the *kendi* (a brass kettle) into the *panavola.* He repeats this three times and chants three times that the marriage is complete. The iron *kappus* are then removed from the wrists of the couple. Then the bride's father unite the hands of the couple. Marriages are conducted either at the bride's residence or in a *kalyana mandapam* and the wedding feast is given by

the bride's parents. The consummation ceremony takes place at the bridegroom's house among the Makkavali and at the bride's house among the Marumakkavali.

On the fourth day after the wedding, all relatives come to see the bride (*ponnupakka varathu*). On that day, they keep some *panavola* in the middle of the platform, place some soil, green peas, and cotton seeds in them and sprinkle water on them. On the seventh day, when all the seeds have sprouted, the newly married couple come to the platform wearing their wedding clothes and circumambulate it three times. The platform is then dismantled. The plantain stem raised on the platform is cut into three pieces and, along with the *muruku* twig and soil, is placed at the base of a milk-bearing tree, such as the jack.

Each subgroup of the Krishnavaka community has a separate cremation ground. They observe death pollution for six days. Generally, most families cremate their dead in their own land. Soon after death, a *pandal* is erected in front of the house with coconut leaves. A ceremonial bath is given the corpse and it is placed on a cot under the *pandal*. A pot, filled with rice, is placed at the head side of the corpse and another at the foot. All children and relatives take rice from the pot kept at the head side and put it into the mouth of the corpse. The eldest daughter pours water from the *kendi* (a brass kettle) each time someone puts rice into the mouth of the corpse. This rice (*vaikkarisi*) is cooked by an Ambattan woman. The corpse is carried on a bier to the cremation ground, along with the pot placed at the foot of the corpse. *Vaikkarisi* is again put into the mouth of the corpse by relatives at the cremation ground. After the cremation, the deceased's widow goes to the burning pyre and throws her *thali* into it. If she wants to live with one of the deceased's brothers, she does not remove her *thali* and does not go to the pyre. They call the cremation day *karumathi*. On the third day, the *padagai* (village headman and other relatives) come to the deceased's house and construct a *velipura marakal* (a room constructed outside the house with green coconut leaves) under the death *pandal*. From that day onwards, the eldest son of the deceased conducts *bali* (offering coconuts, plantain, fruits, rice and green peas to the

dead) every morning in the *velipura marakal.* The *bali* is disposed of in a river or tank every day by the eldest son. Every day, an Ambattan brings the *bali* material and accompanies the chief mourner when he goes to dispose of it. This process continues till the day of disposing of the mortal remains. The Marumakkavali conduct it only on Sundays, Wednesdays or Thursdays. The Makkavali conduct it on the tenth day from the *karumathi.* A feast is given to the relatives on the 16th day. They donate (*danam*) a cow, umbrella, chappals, new clothes, rice and vegetables to a Brahman priest. Some of the deceased's sons tonsure their heads on the third day after cremation. They worship ancestors on Adi Amavasya day every year and on death anniversaries.

They are mainly a land-owning community. However, a few of them are landless. In the past, some of them worked as priests in the Ambadi Krishnan temple in Thiruvananthapuram or as soldiers in the maharaja's army. Others were agriculturists and cattle owners. Now, most of them have become settled cultivators. Some have started small businesses. Those who are educated work in both private and government services.

Each subgroup of the Krishnavaka community has a separate traditional council (*padagi*) to settle disputes among themselves as well as with other communities. It consists of six executive members with a president (*thalaivar*), vice-president, secretary, treasurer and two executive members. The *padagi* are elected by voice vote once a year or once in every three years. The *padagi* appoints a *dandakkaran* or *modalpidi* (paid servant) from their community to pass on messages to their community people. The *padagi* has a significant role in the ritual and social functions of the community. The *padagi's* main role is to settle disputes over land and water as well as property and it imposes cash punishments. The community has a regional association, called the Sri Krishna Dharmaparipalana Sangam, that works for the welfare of the Krishnavaka.

The Krishnavaka are Vaishnavites, but now they worship all the Hindu deities. The chief deity of their families is Lord Krishna. They have village deities, *viz.* Kali and Choudalamma. The regional deity is Lord Muruga. The Krishnavaka celebrate all Hindu festivals, especially Krishna Jayanti.

The Krishnavaka have an oral tradition. Makkavali women sing folk dirges every evening during the period of death pollution.

Traditionally, they accepted water and food from the Brahman and Vellalar and would not accept any type of food and water from the Sambavar, Ambattan and Vannan. The traditional commensal norms have, however, now been relaxed and they accept and exchange water and any type of food with all other communities. There is interdining between the two subgroups. The community has its own cremation grounds but shares water resources with other communities. They share cultivator-labour, landlord-tenant relationships with other communities. The community has entrepreneurs, scholars, white-collar job-holders, teachers, lawyers, engineers and doctors.

Krishnavaka children study upto college level. Some of them drop out from studies at the secondary school level due to economic, or social reasons. They favour family planning. They have access to all civic amenities. Some of them have benefited from the self-employment programme and started small dairies and general merchandise shops.

V.S. DEEP KUMAR

KSHATRIYA RAJU

The Kshatriya Raju were traditionally warriors and rulers. The community has several synonyms, *viz.* Kshatriya Razu, Ravikula Kshatriya, Chasha Kshatriya, Musugu Rajulu and Rajput. They are locally referred to as Raju. The meaning of the word Raju is 'king', while the term Kshatriya conveys that they are a warrior community, who come second in the Hindu *varna* hierarchy. The men of the community use the title Raju as a suffix to their names. The community used to have subdivisions, *viz.* Suryavamsam, Chandravamsam, Murikinati and Nandimandalam. But all the Kshatriya Raju of Tamil Nadu claim to belong to Suryavamsam. The Raju of North Arcot Ambedkar and Chengai-MGR Districts are said to have migrated to the present habitat about six to seven centuries ago, from the Circar area of Andhra Pradesh, to escape from the oppression of Muslim rulers. Thurston (1909) gives a detailed account of their migration.

The Kshatriya Raju are concentrated in the Chengai-MGR, North Arcot Ambedkar, Madurai, Tirunelveli and Kamaraj Districts. Those from the Madurai, Tirunelveli and Kamarajar Districts identify themselves as one group of Rajus, those in the northern districts comprise three other endogamous groups.

The Kshatriya Raju speak Telugu among themselves, and Tamil with others. They use the Telugu and Tamil scripts.

The Kshatriya Raju are nonvegetarian, but do not eat beef and pork. They eat all varieties of vegetables and fruit, pulses, roots and tubers. Their staple food comprises of rice, *ragi* and millets. They use groundnut, gingelly and sunflower oils for cooking. Some men drink liquor occasionally. The menfolk smoke *beedis* and cigarettes regularly. Many men and women chew betel, while a few men use snuff.

The Kshatriya Raju have different endogamous groups, each group in turn, divided into *gotras* and surnames (clans and lineages). In the northern districts, the community has three endogamous groups, but these groups do not have specific names. The people of each division live in a group of villages. Each group identifies itself with the villages inhabited by it.

Even today they practise subgroup endogamy while the southern district the Raju remain as an isolated endogamous group in the community. All the endogamous groups of the community have four common *gotras, viz.* Vasishta, Pasupati, Dhanumajay and Kasyapa. Each *gotra* is further divided into a number of surnames (lineages). Some of the surnames, such as Konduru and Pasupati, are common in all the endogamous groups. Surnames like Chitraju, Konduru, Madiraju, Sagiraju, Elavarthy, Patapati, Khaja, Nadimpalli, Mugaleti and Malraju occur in the first group; Vulchi, Chelamgunta, Patapati and Kondur occur in the second; and Rudra Raju, Mudduluru, Sangaraju, Godi Raju, Chitraju, Keerthipati, Adluru, Muppala, Kondur, Viswa Raju, Raghave Raju and Padma Raju occur in the third group. No social hierarchy is observed among the three divisions in the northern districts. The Rajapalayam Raju from the southern district have four *gotras*. The Vasishta *gotra*, is divided into twelve surnames, such as Pasupati, Vastavya, Mantena, Vailivarti, Sagi and Bagara; the Dhanamjaya *gotra* is divided into nine surnames, such as Chintalapati Dhatla, Gottumukkala, Penumasta, Cherukuri and Kasi; the Kasyapa *gotra* is divided into three surnames, *viz.* Mandapati, Namboori, and Chodaraju; and the Koundinya *gotra* has two surnames, *viz.* Konduri and Mundunuri.

The Kshatriya Raju follow endogamy at the subgroup level and exogamy at the *gotra* and surname levels. Consanguineous marriages are more common. The age at marriage for boys is between 25 and 30 years, while girls get married between 18 and 25. Marriages are arranged by negotiation. Monogamy is the norm. The marriage symbols are the *thali* and toe-rings. Dowry is paid in cash and kind. *Adapadachu lanchanam* or *buttax* (a gift in cash or kind given to the bridegroom's sisters) is more important than dowry. They follow the patrilocal rule of residence. Divorcee and widow remarriage are not socially permitted. Widower remarriages and sororate have social sanction. Of late, marriages between different subgroups or endogamous divisions have been occurring.

Nuclear families outnumber the vertically extended ones among the Kshatriya Raju. They have joking relationships between brothers-in-law as well as sisters-in-law and grand-

parents and grandchildren. Male equigeniture is the rule of inheritance, while succession is by the eldest son.

Kshatriya Raju women have a right to their mother's property like jewellery. They used to observe *ghosha* (seclusion) in the past. Now, women are participating in agricultural operations. A few women are in private and government service. Unlike in other communities, the Kshatriya Raju widows have a special role in marriage ceremonies. A widow offers prayers and *pongal* to the village deity before a marriage.

The Raju of the northern districts do not observe any pre-delivery rituals: they just offer prayers at home during the fifth or seventh month of pregnancy and distribute sweets to relatives and friends. In contrast, the Rajapalayam Raju observe *sreemantham* in her natal home during the seventh month of a woman's first pregnancy. They observe birth pollution for 11 days. A ceremonial bath is given to the mother and child on the 11th day to remove pollution. The Rajapalayam Raju call a Brahman priest to conduct *punyavachanam*. A Brahman priest pronounces the name of the child in its ears.

The Kshatriya Raju observe on the same day tonsuring and ear-boring ceremonies for the child before it is one, or during its third year, usually at a temple of the family deity. The Raju of the northern districts wean the child in the sixth month with *payasam* (sweet rice), but the Raju of Rajapalayam wean the child in the eighth month.

Traditionally, the Raju observe *upanayanam* for boys at the age of 11, but now the *upanayanam* ceremony is on the marriage day. They observe puberty rites for girls. When a girl attains first menarche, she is kept in seclusion at home. They observe five to seven days of puberty pollution. After a purificatory bath on the evening of the fifth or seventh day, a small function is arranged at home to which close relatives and friends are invited. The maternal uncle of the girl gives her a sari, blouse, bangles and cosmetics. The Raju of Rajapalayam conduct the same ceremony on an auspicious day in the third month. This is called *savatta*.

The Raju of the northern and southern districts conduct their weddings very differently. Traditionally, the latter conduct their weddings at the bridegroom's residence. In the

northern districts, the weddings are conducted at the bride's home or in a public *kalyana mandapam*. In the northern districts, two widows, representing the two families, prepare *pongal* and pray to their respective village deities before the marriage. Among the northern Raju, the *thali* is put in the middle of the *kadi* (a yoke used particularly to attach the plough at the time of ploughing). The Rajapalayam Raju do not put the *thali* in the *kadi* before tying it, but they too keep the *kadi* on the marriage dais. On the marriage day, and up to three months after the marriage, a newly married couple among the northern Raju is not allowed to go to any temple. No such restriction exists among the Rajapalayam Raju.

All marriages are arranged by negotiation. On an auspicious day, the bridegroom's father goes to the bride's residence with his relatives, formally presents fruits, flowers, *kumkum*, turmeric and sandalwood powder and fixes the marriage. Both parties exchange *vakkaku* (betel leaf and nuts) as a mark of agreement. If the bride and bridegroom belong to the same *kota* (a hamlet of the Raju), the marriage is registered in the *kota chavadi* (assembly hall). If the bride and bridegroom belong to different *kotas*, the marriage is registered in their respective *kota chavadis*. Later, on an auspicious day, they fix the marriage date and *muhurtham*. At times, marriages may be conducted two or three years after registration. They conduct *sumangali prarthana* (prayers conducted by women) in their respective houses. On another auspicious day they pray to the family deities by offering *pappu* and *uppu* (gram and salt). The bridegroom's family gives the required quantity of gold to the goldsmith to make the *thali*. They place an order with the potter for five *aravini* pots (pots kept on the marriage dais) and with a weaver for dyeing the marriage clothes a light rose in colour. By custom, the bridegroom, the bride's father and the bridegroom's father all wear pale rose-coloured clothes. Nowadays, they wear white dhotis with pale rose-coloured borders. A day before the marriage, the bridegroom goes with a garland to the temple of tutelary God and prays. He then sends the garland to the bride, who wears it. A similar ritual is conducted by the bride's family. The chief rituals of the wedding, thereafter, are the *upanayanam* of the bridegroom, the

kanyadanam and the tying of the *thali* around the bride's neck. The bride and bridegroom exchange *talambralu* (sprinkling turmeric rice). The couple pray to the Arundhati star. Later, they offer prayers in a room where the *aravini* pots are placed. A vegetarian feast is served to relatives. The consummation ceremony is at the bride's home on the night of the wedding, or on an auspicious day within ten days of the marriage.

The Kshatriya Raju cremate their dead. They observe death pollution for 11 days. Usually, the eldest son is the chief mourner and tonsures his head after the cremation. A Brahman priest officiates at the death *samskarams* (rites). On the second day they offer milk and other food items to the deceased at the cremation ground, collect the bones and ashes and dispose of them in the nearest river or tank. They sprout *navadhanyam* (nine kinds of grains) in the house. They observe *siladasham* on the 12th day and the annual death ceremony thereafter. The Raju of Rajapalayam dispose of the bones on the second day in a well near the cremation ground. They conduct *shradham* (death rites) at a tank near the cremation ground for about eight days, *i.e.* from the 3rd day to the 11th day.

Land is the main natural resource of the Kshatriya Raju and it is controlled by individual proprietorship. Most of them are small farmers. Some of them have animal husbandry as a secondary occupation. Some of the poorer men and women of the community work as agricultural and industrial labourers. A few of them do business. Educated members of the community work in both private and government sectors.

The Kshatriya Raju in the northern districts do not have traditional caste councils, but the Raju of the southern districts have well-organised traditional caste councils in every *kota* (village). Every year, they elect a male elder as its president. They have a common association. The president is selected by rotation from among the *kota* presidents. Disputes within the *kota* are settled by the respective *kota panchayat* members before the *kota gumpu.* If the dispute is between two *kotas*, that is settled by the common association.

The Kshatriya Raju are Vaishnavites, but worship all Saiva gods as well. They are Tengalai Vaishnavites. They have family deities such as Venkateswaraswamy, Perumal, Subramanyaswamy,

Muneeswarudu, Ayyanar, Bhadrakali and Chenchulakshmi Amma. The community has village deities, *viz.* Gangamma, Kanikalamma, Mariamma and Muttalamma. They celebrate all major Hindu festivals.

The Kshatriya Raju have traditional community linkages with service castes such as the Ambattan, Vettiyan and Vannan as well as with artisan castes such as the potters, weavers, carpenters and goldsmiths. They do not accept water and food from the service castes and Scheduled Castes. They have separate cremation grounds. They share water sources with other communities.

The Kshatriya Raju community has entrepreneurs, businessmen, scholars, white-collar job-holders, teachers, administrators, engineers, doctors, defence personnel, lawyers and political leaders at village and regional level.

Kshatriya Raju boys and girls study upto college and post-graduate levels. However, some of the girls drop out from studies due to social reasons. They make full use of modern medicare. They favour family planning and couples prefer to have two children. They have access to all civic amenities.

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KUDUMBAN

The Kudumban are also referred to as Pallan and Devendrakulattan in some places. The Kudumban are a Scheduled Caste. According to the 1981 Census, their population was 54,814, of whom 48,587 lived in rural areas. They are distributed in almost all districts, thickly in the plains and sparsely in the hills. Their mother tongue is Tamil.

The origin of the Kudumban is associated with the origin of the Vellalar agriculturists. The Kudumban are also known as the Pallan and in the 1981 Census 993,070 persons have been enumerated as the Pallan. The major concentrations of the Pallan were in the Pandya, Chola and Kongu countries of ancient Tamil Nadu. In the Pandya country, the headman of the Pallan was the Kudumban. As they lived in the *pallam* (lowland area) of the village, they were called Pallan. They were considered to have once belonged to the Vellalar caste. Around the 12th Century, the different caste groups of Tamil Nadu were divided into two groups, the *valakkai* (right-hand) and the *idakkai* (left-hand) communities. All the communities who did agriculture and agriculture-related jobs formed the right-hand division. The Pallan belonged to the right-hand division as they were agricultural labourers. (Thangaraj, 1975).

The Kudumban are nonvegetarian who do not eat beef but eat pork. Their staple food comprises millets such as *kambu*, *cholam* and *ragi*. Rice is consumed occasionally. They eat all the locally available roots, pulses, vegetables and fruit. They use groundnut and gingelly oils for cooking. Men, and some women, drink liquor occasionally. They drink coffee and tea, generally, without milk. Consumption of milk and milk products is meagre. Most men smoke *beedis* or cigarettes. Men and women chew betel leaves, with or without tobacco. Only a few of them use snuff.

The Kudumban women used to wear an ear-ornament called *pambadam,* but now they wear only ear-studs. In the past, women did not wear an upper garment, but now they have started wearing blouses.

Monogamy is the norm among the Kudumban, but polygyny is permitted. They prefer to marry mother's brother's daugh-

ter, father's sister's daughter and niece. Marriages are arranged through negotiation. Generally, boys marry at the age of 21-25 years and girls around 15-19. The marriage takes place at the bridegroom's residence. Dowry is paid in the form of ornaments or cash. The *thali* is the marriage symbol. They use a yellow thread as the *thali* on which a pendant engraved with the image of Pillaiyar has been strung. After the marriage, the pendant is strung on a black thread.

The Kudumban are a patrilineal and patrilocal society. Only sons inherit the father's property, but daughters have the right to claim shares in the mother's property. In case of the death of the father, the eldest son becomes head of the family. Divorcees, widower and widow remarriages are allowed. In case of divorce, the husband has to return double the amount of the dowry money taken at the time of the betrothal ceremony. The children live with the father. In case of the death of the husband, the wife can marry the elder or younger brother of her deceased husband and in case of the death of the wife the husband can marry the younger sister of the deceased wife.

The Kudumban live exclusively in one or two streets of a village. The family is either nuclear or joint. The father or husband is the head of the family. The sons live with their father for a few years after marriage, then move out. But the property is divided only after the death of the parents or after the marriage of all the sons and daughters. Parents in their old age are taken care of by their sons.

During the seventh month of a Kudumban woman's first pregnancy, her parents visit her and serve *kattuchoru* (packed meal) to their relatives. They give gifts to their daughter and take her back to their house for the delivery. The newborn is given *cenai* (palm jaggery water) soon after birth. The mother is given medicines made of local herbs. Pollution is observed for 13 or 16 days. On the 16th or 13th day, they celebrate the *ilai kattuthal* (yellow thread-tying ritual). The child's paternal grandmother ties a yellow thread around the waist of the child and the child's maternal grandparents serve a nonvegetarian feast to the visiting relatives. The mother and child go back to their home on that day or after three months. The child is named within the first month.

The children, during their first year, are tonsured in a temple. The maternal uncle gives the child new clothes. If it is a girl, her ears are pierced on the same day, and the maternal uncle gives her ear-studs. On attaining puberty, a Kudumban girl is given a ceremonial bath. The maternal uncle comes with a sari, flowers, fruits and sweets and arranges a feast for visiting relatives. The women cry *kulavai* (joyful cries) while giving the girl her bath and the girl wears the sari brought by her maternal uncle. The maternal uncle builds a hut and the girl is secluded in it for 16 days during the pollution period. A ceremony is arranged on the 16th day, during which one of the children of the maternal uncle, either male or female, is dressed like a bridegroom and is asked to sit by the side of the girl. The maternal uncle gives a sari and the other relatives present gifts to the girl. All the relatives are served a nonvegetarian feast. The girl is later taken in procession around the village.

The boy's parents initiate the marriage alliance. The betrothal is fixed in the girl's house. The boy's parents visit the girl's house with a betrothal sari, blouse and cosmetics, betel leaves, arecanut and the token betrothal money and hands them over to the girl's father. The girl's father offers a feast to the guests. The marriage sari and the *thali* are presented by the bridegroom's parents. A *pandal* is erected in front of the house and the wedding takes place there. The caste leader hands over the *thali* to the bridegroom who ties it around the bride's neck. The bride and the bridegroom exchange garlands three times. The elders bless the couple by applying *tiruneeru* (sacred ash) on their foreheads. The couple are first given milk and bananas. On the next day, the couple visit the bride's house. The bride carries the *arisipetti* (a box of rice) and the rice is purchased by the maternal uncle for her. At the time of the Adi and Pongal festivals, the newly married couple are given gifts.

In the Kudumban community, the corpse is laid on the floor in a prone position. An oil lamp is placed near the head and a coconut is broken. A twenty-five paise coin is kept on the corpse's forehead. They bring water from the well to bathe the corpse. Then the body is covered with a white cloth and

garlanded. The washerman makes a bier. The barber blows the conch-shell (*sanku*) during the funeral procession. The eldest daughter performs the *kolli* at the corner of the street by breaking a pot full of water if the deceased does not have male issue, otherwise the eldest son performs it in the burial ground. The body is buried with its head towards the south. Usually, the eldest in the family are cremated, while others are buried. On the second day, milk and nine varieties of cereals are offered to the departed soul. On the third day, the sons of the deceased take oilbaths. If the husband dies, the *thali* of the widow is removed on the third day. On the 16th day, the deceased is worshipped with offerings of food liked by him, and the relatives are given a nonvegetarian feast.

The Kudumban are mainly small farmers and agricultural labourers. Some of them are daily wage workers in factories. Some of them are in white-collar jobs. There are teachers, administrators, doctors and engineers from this caste.

The Kudumban have a caste panchayat and the leaders are elected by voice vote. The headman looks after the village deity's temple and organises festivals. All disputes, including divorces, are settled in the caste panchayat. Cash fines are imposed on the guilty. They collect *kalyana sutandiram* (marriage fee) for the caste panchayat.

The Kudumban are Hindus and worship deities such as Kaliammal, Mariammal, Isakkiammal, Madaswamy and Karuppaswamy. In some villages, they have separate temples for the deity Muttumalaiamman, who is worshipped every year on the last Tuesday of the Tamil month *Adi* (July). Animals are also sacrificed. They also worship other Hindu deities, *viz.* Murugan, Siva, Ganesh and Saraswati. Their major festivals are Pongal, Adi, Karthigai, Deepavali and the village festival. Some of them have embraced Christianity, but they still intermarry with Hindu Kudumban.

The relationship of the Kudumban with other castes is cordial. They have a separate barber and washerman. The Chakkiliyan serve the community during the death ceremony. The Kudumban serve the Pillai and Asari in their death ceremonies. The Kudumban are active in local and regional politics.

The Kudumban are now educating their sons and daughters

and a number of the educated are in white-collar jobs. They are offered scholarships for higher studies. They have all civic facilities.

S. MANOHARAN

Kudumban Christian

The Kudumban Christian were converted to Christianity after the advent of the Protestant missions. The Kudumban Christian belong to different denominations. Both the Hindu and the Christian Kudumban live together, intermarry and have social relations.

The Kudumban Christian are nonvegetarians who do not eat beef but eat pork. Their diet is similar to that of their Hindu counterparts. The Kudumban Christian can be found in all subgroups of the Pallan, though, in principle, they do not claim any subgroup identity, being Christian. Though they are Christian, marriage is strictly restricted to their caste only. Their marriages are arranged by their parents through negotiation. Boys are married at 21-25 years and girls at 15-19. They prefer marrying father's sister's daughter or mother's brother's daughter or sister's daughter. Dowry is demanded in cash or in kind. The *thali* is the marriage symbol. A cross is engraved on the *thali*. Marriages are arranged in the church at the bridegroom's village or town and is conducted by the priest of the church. Monogamy is the norm. They are a patrilocal and patrilineal society. Sons inherit the property equally. If the mother has acquired property, it is divided equally among the sons and daughters. The eldest son succeeds the father as head of the family. The family pattern among the Kudumban Christian is either nuclear or joint. In villages where the Christian population is sizeable, they take the advice of the church authorities in settling disputes.

Most Kudumban Christian women are educated more than their Hindu counterparts. Consequently, more of them are in white-collar jobs. Otherwise their status is the same as that of the Hindu Kudumban women.

KULUVAN

The Kuluvan figure in a folk-play in Tamil, *Kuluva Natakam*, which portrays them as bird-hunters (Perumal, 1980). The name Kuluvan is believed to be derived from the name of a water-bird, Kuluvai.

The Kuluvan are distributed mainly in the Tirunelveli and Chidambaranar Districts and in small numbers in Kanniyakumari, Madurai, Kamaraj and Ramanathapuram Districts. The 1901 Census recorded 483 persons in this community. It was further recorded that the "Kuluvan are a small caste of Telugu beggars and pig breeders, akin to the Kuravas and Jogis, found only in the Tirunelveli District".

The mother tongue of the Kuluvan is Telugu. With outsiders, they converse in Tamil.

The Kuluvan are nonvegetarians who do not eat beef but eat pork. Their main diet includes millet, *ragi* and rice. They consume vegetables, roots and tubers and, occasionally, fruit. They use groundnut oil for cooking. They do not cook very much as their womenfolk and children beg in the villages and bring back cooked food. During village festivals and the marriage season they get a lot of such food.

The Kuluvan are very fond of liquor. Women too drink liquor. They also drink coffee and tea. Most of them chew betel leaf, arecanut and tobacco. Some of them use snuff.

The Kuluvan are an endogamous group and do not have further subdivisions among them. They recognise the *varna* system and consider themselves Sudras, placed above the Chakkiliyan who eat beef.

Marriages are arranged by the parents. Mother's brother's daughter, father's sister's daughter or elder sister's daughter is preferred as a spouse. Love marriages are also permitted. Boys are generally married between 18 and 25 years and girls between 14 and 18 years. The *thali* is the marriage symbol (*pottuthali*). Polygyny is allowed. A token bride-price is paid, which the woman has to repay in case she asks for a divorce.

Kuluvan women have a lower status than that of their men. They do all the household work. Some of them beg in the villages, some rear pigs and collect the pig dung to sell to farmers as fertiliser.

For her first delivery, the pregnant Kuluvan woman is taken to her parents' home during the ninth month of pregnancy. Delivery is generally attended on by an elderly woman of the community. Birth pollution is observed for 16 days. The child is named on the third day after birth. The first tonsuring ceremony is arranged either at the village temple or at the Murugan temple at Tiruchendur.

On attaining puberty, the Kuluvan girl is secluded in a separate hut constructed with green coconut leaves by her maternal uncle. Pollution is observed for 16 days. On the last day they observe the *sadangu* (puberty ceremony), when relatives are served a feast and they, in turn, give gifts to the girl.

The marriages of the Kuluvan are arranged through negotiation. The bridegroom's parents first visit the girl's house and ask for the girl's hand. If the girl's parents are willing, the bridegroom's family pays the bride-price and fixes a day for the wedding. The marriage is arranged at the bridegroom's home and a new sari and *thali* are purchased by the bridegroom's parents. The chief ritual of the wedding is that of the bridegroom tying the *thali* around the neck of the bride. A feast is given to all the relatives by the bridegroom's parents, and the relatives in turn pay *moi* to the couple. After a brief visit to the bride's parents' home, the consummation of the marriage takes place. It is a patriarchal and patrilineal society. Both nuclear and joint families are found in equal numbers.

In the event of death among the Kuluvan, the corpse is placed in a prone position and a lighted lamp is kept near the head. The relatives are informed and, on their arrival, water is brought from a nearby well to bathe the corpse, which is then covered with a new cloth and garlanded. It is then placed on the bier and carried to the burial ground. The eldest son performs the *kolli* ceremony. Then the sons have their heads shaved. The Kuluvan perform death rituals

on the third day. All the sons take oilbaths. The relatives give new clothes to the sons and daughters of the deceased.

Disputes, including divorce, are settled by the Kuluvan elders. If they do not succeed, then they approach the elders of other communities.

The Kuluvan are Hindus. Their village deity is Kaliammal, for whom they build a temple. They worship other Hindu deities, such as Murugan, Mariammal, Madasamy and Karuppasamy. They also practise virgin worship. They go on pilgrimages to the Tiruchendur Murugan temple. Their sacred specialists are from their own community.

The main source of income for the Kuluvan is his piggery. But now the men have started working as labourers also. They are generally landless. They have, of late, been alloted house sites by the Government.

There is no traditional social linkage between the Kuluvan and the rest of the communities in their neighbourhood. They have their own burial grounds, but no wells. They fetch water from the wells dug by the village panchayat. The village washerman and barber do not render service to the Kuluvan, hence they manage these jobs on their own.

Illiteracy is very high among the Kuluvan. Kuluvan children drop out of school due to poverty. They favour traditional medicines and rarely visit the local primary health centre. Facilities such as electricity and mass media are available to them but they use them only to a small extent, owing to their poverty.

S. MANOHARAN

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KUMMARI

The Kummari are Telugu-speaking potters living in Tamil Nadu. Their synonyms include Kumbarar, Kummarvalu and Kulalar. The names Kulalar, Kuyavar and Kusavar represent Tamil-speaking potters. The Kummari suffix the titles Chettiar and Naidu with their names, while the Tamil-speaking potters suffix Udayar. Regarding the etymology of the name Kummari, Thurston (1909) writes that Kummara in Telugu, Kumbaro in Oriya and Kumabara in Canarese are corrupted forms of the Sanskrit word *kumbhakara,* meaning 'pot-maker' There are no subgroups among the Kummari. They are distributed mainly along the borders of Andhra Pradesh, particularly in and around Madras, Chengai M.G.R., North Arcot Ambedkar and Dharmapuri Districts. The Kummari speak Telugu among themselves but Tamil with outsiders. They use the Tamil script.

The Kummari are nonvegetarians, but do not eat beef or pork. Their staple food consists of rice, supplemented by *ragi,* millets and locally available pulses and vegetables. Fruit consumption is occasional. Both men and women chew betel leaves and arecanut with lime and tobacco. Men occasionally drink arrack or toddy. They smoke *beedis* and cigarettes.

The Kummari claim that they belong to the Salivahana Vamsam. There are no hierarchial divisions within the community. Exogamous clans such as Thanigala *gotra*, Balchetti *gotra* and Kottamalli *gotra* exist among them. In adition to *gotra,* they also retain family names (*intiperlu*). Persons belonging to the same *gotram* are considered fraternal (*dhayadulu*). Nowadays, the clans do not play a significant role in marital alliances as most Kummari have forgotten these divisions. In the local social hierarchy, the Kummari consider themselves equal to non-Brahman communities like the Vanniyar, Reddiar, Gramani and so on. They claim Sudra status in the *varna* order.

Endogamy at the community level is the rule among the Kummari. Marital alliances are made usually by negotiation. Monogamy is the norm. Sororal polygyny is practised. Cross-cousin and maternal uncle-niece marriages are common among

them. The marriage symbols of women include the *thali* or *bottu* (with a concave shaped gold pendant) and toe-rings. Dowry in kind (*seer varisai*) is given to the girl by her parents at the time of marriage. The rule of residence after marriage is patrilocal. Divorce and widow remarriage are prohibited among them, but a widower is allowed to remarry.

Both nuclear and extended (vertically extended families predominate over the horizontal ones) families are found among the Kummari. Male equigeniture is the rule of inheritance. The eldest son succeeds his father as head of the family.

Kummari women do not inherit any property. But at the time of marriage, they get some wealth, in the form of gold ornaments, from their parents as dowry. They participate in economic activities, play a role in social and religious functions and control family expenditure.

All Kummari children are tonsured and have their ears pierced at the age of one, three or five, in any one of the temples of Venkateswara Perumal. When a Kummari girl attains puberty, pollution is observed for 11 days and the puberty ceremony (*manjal neerattu vizha*) is conducted on the 11th day to terminate pollution. The function is attended by all relatives and neighbours.

Only when the horoscopes of a Kummari boy and girl match the betrothal is arranged. The betrothal ceremony (*nichayathamboolam*) is conducted on an auspicious day. On the day of the betrothal, a married woman, usually the sister of the bridegroom, ties a black bead necklace (*karugamani*) around the neck of the bride. Before this ritual, the bride is given a silk sari by the bridegroom's family. After that, the date of the marriage is fixed by the Brahman priest. On the day of marriage, the bride wears a white sari and blouse with red borders; the bridegroom also wears a white dhoti and shawl and a turban (*uruma*). All these clothes are dipped in turmeric water and dried. A Brahman priest officiates at the marriage.

Some Kummari bury their dead, others cremate them. On the day after the cremation or burial, a death ritual called *pal*, *i.e.* pouring milk, is conducted at the cremation or burial site. The ashes and bones are disposed of in a waterway.

Traditionally, the Kummari are potters. A small section of them are still primarily involved in making and selling earthenware. Due to the increased use of metal utensils, the demand for earthenware has come down, resulting in sizeable sections of the potters shifting to other occupations. The earthenware produced by the Kummari, either directly or by employing Tamil potters (Kuyavar), include earthen lamps (*agalvilakku*), hundi (*undiyal*), stoves (*aduppu*), flowerpots (*poonthotti*) and cooking pots of various sizes and shapes (*satti* and *paanai*). The clay required for making these items is brought by them from the river or lake beds, either in bullock carts or lorries. The essential implements used by them in pottery include an axle (*koor*), a wheel of about one meter in diameter (*saarik*), and a wooden pole (*koiya*). Only men use the wheel to make earthenware. Women make items such as *agalvilakkau* and *aduppu* by hand, help their men in drying the wet earthenware, apply red paint obtained from red sand (*semmannu*) on the earthenware and smoothen the outer surface of the items by polishing with coconut fibre or *poosaakkaai* (a seed). Both men and women sell the finished products in the local weekly markets or at temple festivities. During the festivals of Vinayaka Chaturthi, they make and sell clay idols of Vinayaka, *i.e.* Ganesh. Earthen lamps (*agalvilakkau*) are also made by them for the festival of Karthigai Deepam. Earthen pots are used in the marriage rituals of all Hindu communities. For death rituals too, damp or moist pots (*pacha paanai*) are supplied by them. To a small extent, Kummari children are also involved in this profession, particularly to sell the items in markets and streets. Some of the Kummari have taken up other occupations, such as industrial and agricultural labour and government service.

The Kummari have no traditional community council. Along with the Tamil-speaking potters, the Kuyavar or Kulalar, a community association, the Kulalar Sangam, has been set up and it protects the interests of the Kummari also.

Some Kummari are Saivites, others are Vaishnavites. All major Hindu festivals are celebrated by them. They worship deities such as Periyandavar of Uthukkadu, Perumal of Tirupati and Veerabhadraswami of Ananthapuram (in Chengai-MGR District). Some of their clan deities are Kaliamma, Ellamma,

Katteri and Muneeswaran. In the Tamil month of *Adi*, porridge (*koozh*) is prepared and offered to the Goddess Mariamma and then distributed to the poor.

The Kummari accept food and water from all socially equal-ranking communities. But with communities such as the Parayan, Chakkiliyan and Thoti they do not maintain commensal relations. They share water sources and cremation grounds with other equal-ranking communities. There are no political leaders at any level among them. Political leaders of the Kulalar community represent the Kummari as well.

The Kummari favour formal education, modern medicare and family planning programmes. Their children, by and large, attend schools, at least upto the eighth standard. A few, mostly boys, have studied upto college level. They have access to civic amenities. A few have availed of loans from banks for self-employment in pottery.

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KUNNUVAR

The Kunnuvar or Kunnuvan are referred to by other communities as Mannadiyar. They were described in the Gazetteer of the Madurai District (in Thurston, 1909) as "the principal cultivating caste on the Palani hills. Their own traditions say that their ancestors were Vellalar from the Dharapuram and Kangeyam country in Coimbatore, who went up to the Palani hills four or five centuries ago because the low country was so disturbed by war. They therefore call themselves Kunnuva Vellalar, and state that the name Kunnuvar is derived from Kunnur village in Coimbatore". According to one tradition, they migrated to the Palani hills due to being persecuted by a Muslim king, Tivati Tulukkan, for not converting to Islam. So they are referred to as Mannadiyar, which is derived from *manradiyavar*, 'one who struggled for existence'. They use the surnames Mannadiyar or Pillai. They are aware of the *varna* system and consider themselves Sudras.

The Kunnuvar now live only in the Palani hills of Anna District. Their mother tongue is Tamil and they use the Tamil script.

The Kunnuvar are nonvegetarians who do not eat pork or beef. Rice and *ragi* are their main staples. They eat all available vegetables, roots, fruits and pulses. Some men drink liquor. They drink coffee and tea regularly. They use groundnut and gingelly oils for cooking. Milk products are consumed occasionally.

Originally, the Kunnuvar were of three different endogamous groups — Chinna Kunnuvar, Periya Kunnuvar and Teradi — based on their place of settlement. All three subgroups are equally ranked. Now they intermarry. Marriages are arranged by parents. They marry cross-cousins and sister's daughters. Boys are married at the age of 20-25 years and girls at 18-20. Monogamy is the norm. They neither pay bride-price nor dowry. The *thali* is the marriage symbol. Divorce and widow remarriage are allowed. Levirate and sororate are permitted. They do not pay divorce compensation and the children live either with the father or the mother. Divorce is decided

in the caste panchayat. They are a patrilocal and patrilineal society.

The Kunnuvar live in either nuclear or mixed extended families. An avoidance relationship is maintained between the mother-in-law and the son-in-law. A joking relationship exists between a man and his younger brothers-in-law and sisters-in-law. Properties are divided among the sons and the eldest son succeeds his father.

Kunnuvar women work in the fields and have a role in all social and religious activities. They have no role in social control. Though they contribute to family income, they do not control family expenditure.

A Kunnuvar woman's first delivery is arranged in her parents' house. Birth pollution is observed for thirty days. In some villages, they construct a separate hut for delivery. They name the child on the third day, after a family deity or ancestors. After thirty days, or after three months, the mother and child go back to their own home. On that day, the child's father arranges a small nonvegetarian feast. They celebrate the first tonsuring ceremony in the Murugan temple at Palani. The child's ears are also pierced on that day.

On attaining puberty, a Kunnuvar girl is kept in a separate hut made by her maternal uncle. She has to stay in that hut for nine days. She is bathed on the third, fifth and ninth day. On the ninth day, her maternal uncle gives her a sari.

In the Kunnuvar community, the bridegroom's parents initiate the marriage proposal. If the boy's maternal uncle or paternal aunt or his elder sister has a daughter, first preference is given to the girl for the marital alliance. The marriage is celebrated in the bridegroom's residence. The marriage sari and the *thali* are purchased by the bridegroom's parents. The bride and bridegroom are asked to sit on a *mukkali* (chair) in front of the *nadaimaram*. An elderly person hands over the *thali* to the bridegroom and he ties it around the neck of the bride. They distribute betel-leaf with arecanuts to all the invitees, starting with the community head, *mannadiyar*. The consummation ceremony takes place at the bridegroom's house.

The Kunnuvar dead are buried. The dead body is bathed and covered with a new white cloth. It is then placed on a

bier and carried to the burial ground, preceded by drummers. Rites are performed by the eldest son for the mother and the youngest for the father. The person who performs the rites has to remain indoors for three days. On the third day, he has an oilbath. Then he walks up to the *talaivasal*, or village entrance, and returns to the house. In case of the death of a husband, his wife removes her *thali* on the same day as the funeral.

Being agriculturists, land is the major economic resource for the Kunnuvar. Most of them own land. Those who do not, work as agricultural labourers. They are paid in cash. Their cash crops are sold in the market for cash, either directly or through middlemen.

In their villages, the Kunnuvar have their own caste panchayats and a hereditary caste headman called *mannadiyar*. All the *mannadiyar* are controlled by a headman called *pattakkarar* who lives in a central village, where most of the community lives. His post is hereditary. Most community disputes are settled by the caste panchayat.

All the Kunnuvar are Hindus and Lord Murugan is their main deity. Panguni Uttiram, Thai Pusam, Karthigai, Deepavali and Pongal are their main festivals. They worship deities such as Karuppanaswamy, Pudanacci and Kaliammal in the Tamil months of *Adi* and *Panguni*. They worship family, village and regional deities. They conduct their pujas in the temples by themselves. They have an oral tradition and sing folk-songs.

The relationship of the Kunnuvar with other castes is cordial. Their neighbouring castes are the Chettiar, Asari, Pulayar, Paliyar, Pillai and Chakkiliyan. They rank themselves with the Chettiar and Asari. They do not allow Harijans inside their homes, but allow the Pulayan and Paliyan because of their equal status. They avail of the services of the village barber and washerman. They share wells and cremation grounds with other equal ranking castes. Landlord-tenant and cultivator-labour relationships are maintained with other communities of the area.

The Kunnuvar are now educating their sons and daughters atleast upto secondary school level. They favour both modern

and traditional medicines and have accepted modern family planning programmes. They have access to civic amenities.

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KURAVAR

The Kuravar are a Scheduled Caste. They live in the Kanniyakumari, Chidambaranar and Nellai Kattabomman Districts. They are sparsely distributed elsewhere in Tamil Nadu. Vedar, Vettuvar, Vettaikkaran and Veduvar are their synonyms. They are also referred to as Koravar. The size of their population was 71,065 in the 1981 Census.

Etymologically the word Kuravar is derived from the Tamil word *kuram*, meaning 'palmistry' (Mullaly, 1892; Subramanian, 1981). The word may also be derived from the term *kunravar*, meaning 'hill men', as they were inhabitants of the hills and hunters and food-gatherers. Regarding their origin, they consider themselves the descendants of the hill king Nambirajan who got his daughter married to Lord Murugan. Consequently, they are described in the *Kanda Puranam* as hunters, whose womenfolk are fortune-tellers and tattoo-markers.

The staple food of the Kuravar is rice and millet, supplemented by pulses. They are nonvegetarian. They eat pork but not beef. They consume, moderately, all kinds of vegetables, roots and tubers, and, occasionally, fruit. They use groundnut and gingelly oils for cooking. They drink coffee or tea. Their men smoke *beedis* and cigarettes and drink liquor. Women chew betel leaves with or without tobacco. A few of them use snuff.

The Kuravar are an endogamous group. They were originally divided into six occupational (Mullaly, 1892; Subramanian, 1981) subgroups, *viz*. Kavalkara Kuravar (watchmen), Uppu Kuravar (saltmongers), Thappai Kuravar (bamboo splitters), Karuveppilai Kuravar (sellers of curry leaves), Paccaikuthi Kuravar (tattoo-markers) and Koodaikatti Kuravar (basket-makers). The Uppu Kuravar, Karuveppilai Kuravar, Thappai Kuravar, Paccaikuthi Kuravar and Koodaikatti Kuravar are considered low ranking, as they are nomads. Some of them used to indulge in robberies and other criminal activities. However this was in the past. The criminal profile of the community is not accepted by the Kuravar of the southern districts of Tamil Nadu. They recognise only three subgroups among them *viz*. Kannappar *kulam* (name of the Saiva Saint),

Veduvar *kulam* and Kuravar *kulam*, of which the first one claims to be superior to the other two.

The Kuravar, being distributed throughout the state having similar occupation, the subgroup identities and the social divisions vary place to place. The nomenclature Kuravar and Koravar mean the same. They are treated differently, in the constitutional status. The future of the same has yet to be decided.

Monogamy is the norm among the Kuravar. Polygyny is allowed when the first wife is barren. Marriages are arranged through negotiation. The Kuravar prefer to marry the father's sister's daughter. The age at marriage for boys is 21-25 years and for girls it is 16-20. The *thali* is the marriage symbol and they use a pendant with the image of Pillaiyar (Ganesh) and a *sanku* (conch-shell) engraved on it. The *thali* chain may or may not have black beads. The marriage takes place in the bridegroom's house. It is a patrilocal and patrilineal society. Divorce and widow remarriage are allowed. The caste panchayat decides divorce cases. Bride-price is paid. The husband has to pay compensation if he divorces his wife.

Both nuclear and joint families exist among the Kuravar. The father is the head of the family. The property is divided only among the sons and only after the marriage of all the sons and daughters. Sons have to look after their parents in their old age. The eldest son succeeds as head of the family after his father's death. There is no avoidance relationship. They have joking relationships with their brothers-in-law and sisters-in-law.

Kuravar women have a secondary status. They are consulted in all family affairs. They contribute to the family income by earning money through fortune-telling. They help their menfolk in basket-making and go out to collect wild grass to make brooms. They have the right to divorce their husbands on grounds of ill-treatment. Women are now getting an education and a few of them are in white-collar jobs.

The pregnant Kuravar woman is taken to her natal home during her seventh or ninth month. Prior to this, her parents visit her with *kattuchoru* (different rice preparations) and distribute it to all the relatives. They give *sulvalaiyal* (bangles)

to their daughter and then take her to their home. Birth pollution is observed for thirty days. On the 7th or 16th day, the grandmother ties a yellow thread around the waist of the child. A small vegetarian feast is given to all the relatives. They do not observe any naming ceremony. However, they name the child after thirty days. The first tonsuring ceremony takes place at the family deity's temple when the child is one. The child's ears are bored on the same day. The maternal uncle presents the child ear-studs.

On attaining puberty, the Kuravar girl is bathed and secluded in a hut erected by her maternal uncle and his sons. The uncle presents her a sari, bananas and sweets. A small feast is arranged for visiting relatives. Pollution is observed for 16 days. The puberty ceremony is celebrated either on the 16th day, the 13th day or after three months.

In the Kuravar community, the bridegroom's parents first approach the girl's parents with the marriage proposal. The horoscopes of the boy and girl are matched and, if found to match, the betrothal ceremony is held at the girl's house to confirm the alliance. The boy's parents present the girl a sari, flowers, fruit, betel leaves and arecanut, and offer a token bride-price to her parents. Then they fix an auspicious day for the marriage. The wedding takes place at the bridegroom's house. The bridegroom's parents purchase the marriage sari and *thali*. The bridegroom ties the *thali*, after it has been blessed by the elders, around the bride's neck. The bridegroom's sister, who stands behind the bride, helps her brother in tying the *thali*. Then the couple exchange garlands three times and receive the blessings of the elders. All the relatives are given a feast. They, in turn, offer gifts to the couple. The consummation ceremony is at the bride's house.

The Kuravar keep their dead in a sitting position. A lighted oil lamp is kept by the side of the corpse, together with two halves of a coconut. A 25 paise coin is placed on the corpse's forehead. After being bathed, clad in new cloth and garlanded, the corpse is placed on a bier and taken in procession. Before leaving for the burial ground, the women offer *vaikkarisi* (rice). If the deceased does not have male issue, the eldest daughter performs the *kolli* (last rites), in front of the house by breaking

an earthen pot near the head of the corpse. Otherwise the eldest son performs the *kolli* by breaking an earthen pot at the burial ground. Usually they bury their dead, but they cremate the body if it is that of the eldest. On the next day, the milk pouring ceremony takes place. Death entails pollution for 16 days. A nonvegetarian feast is served. The relatives give new clothes to the sons and daughters. On the 16th day, the deceased is worshipped with offerings of his or her favourite food. If the deceased is survived by his wife, the widow removes her *thali* on the day of the burial. The deceased husband's brother garlands his sister-in-law and removes the *thali*. He ties it to the bier near the feet of the corpse. She gets new clothes from her brothers and parents-in-law.

The main occupation of the Kuravar is basket-making, fortune-telling, broom-making and tattooing. The women collect the wild grass for broom-making and for basket-making. Men collect the sticks of the thorny tree locally called *udai*. They keep two or three parrots in a wooden cage for fortune-telling. Envelopes containing photographs of different deities and pieces of paper on which fortunes are written are also kept in the cage. The parrot picks one among them and the fortune-teller reads the paying client's fate. A few Kuravar are in white-collar jobs as policemen and teachers.

The Kuravar are Hindus. Originally, Perumal (Vishnu) was their caste deity. But now they give more importance to Lord Murugan as he, according to legend, married Valli, the daughter of the Kurava king Nambirajan. They worship Mariammal, Kaliammal, Muniasamy and Karuppasamy as their family deities. Their important festivals are Pongal, Deepavali, Karthigai and Adi. They worship Murugan in the Tamil month of *Panguni* (March). There are some Christians among the Kuravar, but they too follow certain traditional Hindu customs.

The Kuravar do not have any caste panchayat. Their disputes are settled by their caste elders. Even divorces are decided by their caste elders.

The relationships of the Kuravar with the other castes in the area are very cordial. They have their own well for water and their own burial ground. The Kuravar are now educating

their sons and daughters. But due to poverty, they are unable to send them for higher studies. They have access to civic amenities. They favour family planning.

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KURICHCHAN

The Kurichchan also call themselves Alambadi Kurichchan. They are referred to by different synonyms, such as Kannada Gounder, Kurichcha Gounder and Kunjidigar. The Kurichchan suffix Gowda or Gounder to their names.

The term *kurichi* means 'hunter'. Kurichchan is 'a person who hunts animals'. They are reported to have, in the past, hunted animals in the hills with bows and arrows. The Kurichchan has migrated to its present habitat, *i.e.* Dharmapuri District, from Alambadi forest area in the Kollegal taluk of the present Mysore District. Their traditional deity, Muttapa or Rangappa, finding himself uncomfortable in the Mysore region, took up a new abode, they narrate. And add that a few Kurichchans followed him till they reached the Baramahal tract in Dharmapuri and Hosur regions of Tamil country, where they settled as hunters.

According to another Kurichchan version, they migrated from the Ponnachi hills of the Mysore-Malabar region to the Dharmapuri hills during the Maratha-Mysore wars. Historically, this was probably around 1688-89 A.D. Even now, a few Kurichchans remember, in their oral tradition, the rule of Abdul Nabi Khan, Nawab of Cuddapah, who extended his possessions southwards and by 1714 A.D. had made himself ruler of the Baramahal area of Dharmapuri, Hosur and Krishnagiri.

The Kurichchan are a Scheduled Tribe. According to the 1981 Census, their total population in Tamil Nadu was 1169.

The Kurichchan speak Kannada, among themselves and Tamil with others. They use the Tamil and Kannada scripts. Some Kurichchan are conversant in Telugu and Urdu.

The Kurichchan are nonvegetarians, but do not eat beef. They eat pork and the flesh of many forest animals and rodents. Their staple food is rice and *ragi* and they consume vegetables moderately. They consume all varieties of pulses, roots, tubers and a small quantity of fruit. They use groundnut oil for cooking. They consume very little milk and milk products. They drink coffee and tea. Men drink liquor regularly,

particularly *henda* and *sarai* (arrack). Their women also drink liquor during ceremonial occasions. Kurichchan men are fond of smoking *beedis* and their women chew betel leaves with tobacco.

The Kurichchan are an endogamous group. They do not have any exogamous social divisions but follow the *mama-aithe makkal* (consanguineous cousins) custom of marriage alliances. Junior sororate is allowed in case the first wife is barren. Child marriage was earlier practised, but nowadays the age at marriage varies from 14 to 18 years for girls and from 22 to 25 for boys. Their mode of acquiring mates are by negotiation, mutual consent and, occasionally, by elopement.

Monogamy is the present norm. The Kurichchan also permit polygyny (sororal and non-sororal) and junior sororate, in case the first wife is barren or maladjusted. The *thalibottu* with *karumani* (black beads) and *sodaramamatali* (blanket thread) and toe-rings are the symbols of marriage. Giving *tara lancha*, *i.e.* bride-price, is still prevalent among them. But now, in a few cases, bride-price has given way to dowry. They follow the patrilocal rule of residence after marriage. Divorce, *i.e. thali itegiyodu* is permitted with the approval of the *kula panchayat*. The *ooru gowda* consults both spouses before granting the divorce. The grounds for divorce are barrenness, impotence and insanity. Compensation is given to the aggrieved party. If the fault lies with the wife, the elders of the panchayat ask her to remove the *thali*, which will be given to her husband. The children are the responsibility of the father in divorce cases. Widows, widowers and male divorcees can remarry within their community under the *serike* custom where *thali*-tying is not allowed.

Most Kurichchan live in nuclear families. An avoidance relationship is observed between mother-in-law and son-in-law and between daughter-in-law and father-in-law. A joking relationship is allowed with brother-in-law, *i.e.* wife's elder and younger brother, and grandparents and grandchildren. The Kurichchan follow the Hindu law of inheritance and all the sons have rights to ancestral property. The eldest son succeeds as the head of the family, after his father's death.

Kurichchan women have a secondary status compared to

men. They do not have any right over ancestral property. They participate in agricultural operations, animal husbandry, and other economic activities. They participate in all social and ritual activities. Most women work as daily wage labourers or agricultural labourers and support their families.

The Kurichchan do not observe pre-delivery rituals but strictly observe post-delivery pollution. The pregnant woman is usually taken to her natal home for the first delivery during the seventh or eighth month. They observe birth pollution for nine days. On the ninth day, both the mother and child are given a bath and they offer a nonvegetarian feast to the invitees. They do not observe a naming ceremony; they simply ask the child's maternal uncle to give it a name. The tonsuring ceremony (*mande thegeyodu*) is conducted at a temple or at a pilgrim centre. This is generally performed in the fourth or fifth year. The ear-boring (*kivichchodu*) is done for girls after the tonsuring. When a girl attains puberty (*doddamanishi*), she is asked to stay in a separate hut, *taniya gudise,* erected by her maternal uncle (*sodara mava*). The girl is kept in the *taniya gudise* for 11 days. On the 11th day, she re-enters her house after a bath and participates in a simple ceremony. Her *sodara mava* presents her a sari, blouse piece, fruits and sweets. The married women give her *pasupu kumkkume* (turmeric and vermilion). A nonvegetarian feast is served.

Marital alliances are fixed by negotiation. In the past, a Kurichchan *lagna* (marriage) was celebrated for seven days. This has been reduced to two days. The first day is called *sappara dina* and the second day *muhurtham dina.* The marriage ceremony is held at the bride's residence. On *sappara dina* they erect a *pandal* before the bride's residence. On that day, the bride's party receives the bridegroom and his family with ceremonial music and takes them to a nearby temple where they perform the *pradhana* ceremony. On *muhurtham dina,* the bride and the bridegroom bathe, wear new clothes and are taken to the *sappara* (*pandal*) with ceremonial music. The *nattami,* one of the *kula panchayat* functionaries, officiates at the marriage. The *nattami* gives the *thali* to the bridegroom, who ties it around the neck of the bride at the *muhurtham* hour and *minjegalu* (toe-rings) are put on her toes. Then the bride and bridegroom are made to sit facing each other and

they shower sacred rice on each other's heads. The elders bestow their blessings by throwing *akshata* (turmeric rice) on the married couple. The invitees are served a vegetarian feast by the bride's parents. The consummation ceremony (*vasige*) is performed after three months at the bride's natal home.

Most Kurichchan bury their dead. If the deceased has died due to a major disease or suicide, the body is cremated. The entire Kurichchan community turns up on hearing the news of the death. They adorn the corpse with *nama* (Vaishnavite mark) or *vibhuti* (sacred ash mark) and new cloth is wrapped around the body. The death rites are conducted in the presence of the *kula panchayat* members. The corpse is taken on a bier to the *sudigadu* for burial amidst mournful music. They celebrate the *chikka karya* on the fifth day and *dodda karya* on the eleventh day after burial.

The major economic resource for the Kurichchan is land. Earlier, they hunted animals and traded them for grain and cloth. With development in the hills, the Kurichchan stopped hunting and started to rear sheep and goats and became animal-breeders and livestock traders. A few of them got land and now most of them have become settled agriculturists. Some Kurichchans are employed in government service. A few do petty business.

The tribal council or *kula panchyat* exists at the village level among the Kurichchan. The head of each household becomes a member in the *kula panchayat*. There is some hierarchy among the hereditary office bearers of the *kula panchayat*. The order of the hierarchy of the *kula panchayat* is *ooru gowda, mantri gowda, yajaman, nattami* and *kotakara*.

There are Namadharis (Vaishnavites) as well as Vibhudhidharis (Saivites) among the Kurichchan. They consider Muttappa or Rangaswamy as their community deity. They worship him every Saturday. They also worship other Hindu deities such as Mariamman, Pamalayamman, Arungeeswarar, Akkumariamman, Draupathiamman, Pattalamman, Chelliamman, Subramanyaswamy, Varadarajaswamy and Anjeneyaswamy, and go on pilgrimages to sacred centres such as Tirupati and Srirangapatna. They have their own *nattami* as a sacred specialist, but even now a few Kurichchans engage the priests of the Sholiga tribe of the Mysore District, for their life-cycle

rituals and to cure ailments believed to be caused by evil spirits. They celebrate Sankranti, Ugadi, Deepavali and Gowri Ganesha.

The Kurichchan perform *kelike*, a form of folk theatre that goes on throughout the night on festival days. *Kelike* dramas usually depict mythological themes in poetry and prose.

The Kurichchan accept cooked food from the Brahman, Ayira Vysya, Vokkaliga Gowda, Vanniyar and Kurumba. They share wells with their superior communities but not with the lower castes. They share burial grounds with other Hindus. They maintain a patron-client relationship with the Vanniyar and Vokkaliga Gowda. They also maintain cultivator-labour relationships. They receive the services of the barber and washerman.

Modern intercommunity linkages have recently been established among the Kurichchan, as some of them have become businessmen, white-collar job-holders and teachers. Political leadership is slowly emerging among them at the village and panchayat union level. Most young Kurichchans are becoming active members in regional politics.

The Kurichchan have not, since 1980, got Scheduled Tribe certificates. Though the Kurichchan are recognised by the Government of India as a Scheduled Tribe, there is a local problem, their identity being confused with that of the neighbouring Konda Kapu, who are a non-Scheduled Tribe. Because of this, they say they have not got many of the welfare measures meant for Scheduled Tribes.

Kurichchan boys and girls go to school. While the girls study up to the secondary school level, boys go on to college. They make full use of modern medicare. They are aware of family planning and favour it. As most of them are landholders, they utilise irrigation facilities and also use chemical fertilisers and insecticides. They have access to all civic amenities.

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KURUBA

The Kuruba are popularly known as Kurubar. Some of them are called Prathama Sudras and Indra Sudras. The caste is also known by the name of Kamakajatiyavaru and Kanakadas. Gouda and Heggade are their titles, the corresponding feminine equivalents being Gaudati and Heggadati. The name Kuruba is a derivative of the Canarese root *kuri*, meaning 'sheep'. The Kurubas tend sheep, shear the wool and weave blankets or *kamblis* out of the wove.

Some Kurubas split their community name into its syllables, with each syllable pertaining to one God: *ku* for Vishnu; *ru* for Rudra or Siva; and *ba* for Brahma. This is a story narrated regarding the origin of the Kuruba community (Nanjundayya and Iyer, 1931): A chief of the Okkaliga caste (Heggade) had a prodigal son called Padmanna, who was nicknamed *undadabhate* (glutton). The father turned him out of his house to sustain himself on agriculture. He had been specially enjoined neither to fell *phalasa* trees (bastard teak) nor dig up ant-hills, but the perversity of his disposition made him do these very things. On his digging an ant hill on which stood such a tree, six sheep came out and surrounded him, demanding protection with loud bleats. Padmanna did not know what to do, but his prayer to Lord Siva brought down Bire Devaru (Viresa) who became his tutelary deity. He was made to give up tilling the soil and take to tending sheep as his occupation. It is said that the Kadu Kuruba (jungle Kuruba) are descendants of this man by his *rakshasi* wife, a daughter of Hidimbi, and the Ooru Kuruba are his descendants by Sumalini, daughter of Sunanda. The Ooru Kuruba are divided into three divisions, Halu, Ande and Kambli.

The Kuruba are distributed in the Periyar and Coimbatore Districts. They inhabit both the plains and hilly areas. They speak Kannada among themselves, and Tamil, the local language, with other communities. They use the Tamil script for reading and writing.

The Kuruba are nonvegetarians, but they abstain from eating beef. Their staple food includes *ragi* and rice. They consume

different cereals, pulses, vegetables, greens and fruit. They use groundnut and sunflower oils for cooking. They drink coffee and tea. Kuruba men habitually drink *kallu* (toddy) and *sarayam* (arrack). They smoke *beedis* and cigarettes and chew betel leaves and tobacco.

The Kuruba community has three endogamous groups, *viz.* the Halu Kuruba, Ande Kuruba and Kambli or Jadi Kuruba. The Kuruba in Tamil Nadu have further subdivisions. The Halu Kuruba have three subdivisions *viz.*, Somvaradavaru (Monday Kurubas), Brihaspativaradavaru (Thursday Kurubas) and Adityavaradavaru (Sunday Kurubas). They are called after the day on which they worship their family gods. Halu Kuruba are the largest endogamous group. They are also called Hosa (new) and Soda (pure) Kuruba, and sometimes Mullu Jan, meaning that they abstain from liquor. The prefix *haalu* means milk and is meant to denote their superiority over other divisions. Ande Kuruba are so called because they used to strain the milk of their sheep into a sloped bamboo *ande.* Kambli Kuruba weave *kamblis* (coarse blankets) and their women wear aprons of *kamblis.*

The Kuruba community contains a large number of exogamous clans (Nanjundayya and Iyer, 1931), known as *kula.* The Kuruba clans include Agni (fire), Arasina (turmeric), Ane (elephant), Havu (snake), Belli (silver), Bola (bangle), Chinna (gold), Gouda (headman), Halu (milk), Majjiga (buttermilk), Muttu (pearl), Mavilu (peacock), and Samanthi (a flower). Marital alliances are arranged across clans.

The Kuruba are Sudras in the *varna* order, and rank with the Okkaligar or the cultivating castes.

The Kuruba follow endogamy at the community level and exogamy at the subdivision and clan level. They marry their sister's daughter, mother's brother's daughter or father's sister's daughter. The age at marriage for girls is around 20 years and for boys 22. Marriage by negotiation and mutual consent are the common modes. Exchange of sisters is rarely practised. Monogamy is the norm, but sororate polygamy is also practised if the first wife is barren. The *thali* and toe-rings, are the marriage symbols of women. Both bride-price and dowry are paid. They follow either the neolocal or patrilocal rule of

residence after marriage. Divorce is rare, but permitted. After divorce, a woman returns the *thali* to her husband. Divorcees of both sexes, widows and widowers may remarry.

Most Kurubas live in nuclear families. An avoidance relationship exists between mother-in-law and son-in-law, daughter-in-law and father-in-law. A joking relationship exists between sister-in-law and brother-in-law, cross-cousins, affinal relatives and between grandparents and grandchildren. All the sons have equal shares in ancestral property. The eldest son succeeds as head of the family, after his father's death.

Kuruba women are mostly confined to household duties. They play a significant role in most socioeconomic activities, such as agricultural operations and animal husbandry. They contribute to the family income as well as control family expenditure. Women do not have decision-making powers, and have a lower status than the men.

The pre-delivery ritual, *sreemantham* or *valaikappu,* is observed when a Kuruba woman is in the seventh month of her first pregnancy. The delivery is conducted at her natal home. Post-delivery pollution is observed for seven or eleven days. On the 11th day, the mother and the child are given purificatory baths. Children are tonsured at a piligrim centre such as Gumatapura or Madeswaram Malai. Children's ear-lobes are pierced when they are three.

Puberty rites (*pushpavathi*) are observed for Kuruba girls when they attain menarche. The girl is kept in seclusion for nine days in a temporary hut constructed by her maternal uncle. On the tenth day, a purificatory bath is given to the girl and the elders bless her. Her maternal uncle gives her clothes, sweets and gifts. A feast is served to the relatives in the evening.

Kuruba marriages are celebrated for three days. The proposal for a marriage initially comes from the boy's family. If both families agree to the alliance, then they perform *vilyada sastra* (exchange of betel leaves and nuts) and a *lagna patrika* or marriage agreement document is prepared after an auspicious day for the wedding is fixed. The wedding takes place at the bridegroom's residence. They perform a *maithelai vadhu* ceremony for the bride and the bridegroom at their respective

homes, just before the wedding. *Devaroota,* or Lord's feast, is celebrated on the first day, with the bride and bridegroom worshipping their ancestors. They fast till sunset. They worship Goddess Parvathi and make offerings of cooked food and coconuts. On the second day, *modalarasina* is celebrated. During this ceremony, the bride and the bridegroom are smeared with a paste of turmeric, *kumkumam* and sandalwood. On the third day, the Kuruba construct a *pandal* in the bridegroom's residence. The milk post, is erected by the bridegroom's maternal uncle. The bride and her party arrive in the evening and halt at a temple outside the village. They are then invited by the bridegroom's family and brought in a procession to the bridegroom's house.

The bridegroom wears the *bhasinga* or the marriage chaplet tied to the turban. The *samyada gudda* (priest) officiates at the marriage. The *thali* is tied around the bride's neck by the bridegroom. The elders bestow their blessings by throwing a handful of turmeric-stained rice on the couple. Then, *kanyadan* (gifting away of the girl) is conducted. A nonvegetarian feast follows. The marriage expenses are borne by the bridegroom's party. The consummation ceremony takes place on an auspicious day in the bride's house.

The Kuruba bury their dead. The corpse is bathed in warm water and a new cloth is wrapped around it. It is then placed on a bier (*chattadamira*) in a prone position. If an unmarried girl dies, the body is rolled up in a *kambli* (a black coarse blanket) and carried out by two persons. Before the body is removed from the house, the deceased person's wife or husband, exchanges betel leaf and arecanut with the dead. The body is buried, the head facing the south. On the same day, both milk and ghee are poured on the grave. On the third day, *moor kulin* is observed by offering cooked food at the grave. Pollution is observed for 11 days. *i.e.* upto the *thithi* ceremony. On this day, the chief mourner goes to the grave and offers puja and food and fruit liked by the deceased when he was alive.

The traditional occupation of the Kuruba is to tend sheep and weave *kamblis*. At present, their primary occupation is agriculture and many work as agricultural labourers. Some are employed as peons and teachers. A few do petty business. Their

subsidiary occupation is rearing sheep. Most of them have given up their traditional occupation of tending sheep and weaving *kamblis*.

The *gouda* is the head of the Kuruba *kula panchayat*. They resolve such cases as adultery, rape, elopment, theft, disputes over land and disrespect to traditional norms. Regional *sabhas* or associations have been formed to safeguard their interests and implement welfare and developmental activities.

The Kuruba worship all the Hindu deities. They consider Beereswara as their *kuladeivam* (clan deity). They go to temples on Sundays, Mondays and Thursdays. They also worship Mahalakshmi, Raman, Mariamma, Mailara and Bathyappa. They celebrate all the Hindu festivals, such as Ugadi, Dussehra, Sankranti, Gowri Puja and Deepavali.

The Kuruba accept cooked as well as uncooked food from the neighbouring Okkaliga, Naicker, Vellalar and Vettuvar communities, but not from the Adi Karnataka, Ambattan and Vannan. They share water sources with others. They have a separate burial ground. Some of them maintain patron-client, landlord-tenant and cultivator-labour relationships with other communities. The village washerman and barber render services to them.

Most Kuruba children go to school. Dropouts from school are due to socioeconomic reasons. The Kuruba use modern medicare and family planning methods. They have access to civic amenities.

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KURUMAN

The Kuruman are a Scheduled Tribe. Other communities call them either Kurumans or Kurumbas. They call themselves Kuruba. They used to suffix the title Gounder where there are Gounders, in identification with the latter, to command a higher social status. Only a few use this title now. The younger generation do not add any titles to their names. Most of them live in Dharmapuri District. The 1981 Census report has returned them with a total population of 14,932.

The connection between the Kuruman and the Kurumba who dwell in the jungle and the Kurumba (shepherds and weavers) who live in the plains and open country is disputed. The 1891 Madras Census Report says, "The Kurumbas or Kurubas are the modern representatives of the ancient Kurubas or Pallavas who were once so powerful throughout southern India who were scattered far on plains".

It is believed that they might have migrated from Karnataka long ago, the only evidence for which is the Kannada dialect they speak in the house. The younger generation of the community perceives its distribution only at the local level, but the elders are aware of their distribution at the State level. They converse in Tamil with others.

The Kuruman are basically nonvegetarians, but do not eat pork or beef. Their staple food is rice. They also eat cereals, millets and spices. They use groundnut and gingelly oils for cooking. They eat all available vegetables and fruits. They drink coffee and tea. The men occasionally drink liquor. They chew betel leaves with betel nuts and some chew tobacco also. They smoke *beedis* and cigarettes and some people use snuff.

The Kuruman are endogamous. They have several exogamous clans, each called *kulam*. The names of the *kulams* appear to be in the process of extinction. They were able to remember these nine *kulams,* but admit there could be a few more: Deva Kulam, Thumba Kulam, Aria Kulam, Raja Kulam, Marali Kulam, Arasa Kulam, Basari Kulam, Anna Kulam and Sankili Kulam.

After marriage, the Kuruman tend to set up nuclear families. A joking relationship exists between sister-in-law and brother-

in-law. An avoidance relationship exists between mother-in-law and son-in-law, daughter-in-law and father-in-law. The rules of inheritance among the Kuruman used to be male primogeniture, but gradually it is becoming equigeniture. The eldest son succeed as the head of the family. Nowadays, property is divided after the death of the father, and the mother becomes dependent on any one of the sons of her choice. Formal divorce is looked down upon by the community, but is occasionally granted on grounds of incompatibility. Women are not allowed to remarry after divorce or the death of their husbands, but widowers and divorced men can remarry.

The Kuruman women have a low status, though they participate equally in economic activities, contribute to the family income and control the family expenditure. They play a supportive role in agricultural activities. They take care of cattle. They participate in religious ceremonies and life-cycle rites.

In the seventh month of a woman's first pregnancy, the Kuruman perform a kinship function (*valaikappu*), in which the woman is dressed in new clothes, decorated with flowers, and anointed with sandal paste by elderly women. The woman wears a lot of bangles on her hands. A feast is served. The delivery of the first child takes place either at the pregnant woman's natal home or in a hospital. Post-delivery pollution is observed for 12-16 days after which a purification-cum-naming ceremony is performed. Customarily the tonsuring ceremony for both boys and girls used to be performed in the ancestral temples before the age of five. This practice has been given up in most families. Instead, children are tonsured in temples such as that of Palani Murugan.

The puberty ceremony is observed among the Kuruman either in a modest way, by serving a feast to the immediate relatives, or as an elaborate function among the affluent, when all the relatives are invited for a feast and they offer gifts to the girl.

Adult marriages are the rule among the Kuruman. Marriage with consanguineous cousins was preferred, but this is decreasing in families with greater affluence. Marriages are arranged by elders through negotiation and after consultation with the *oor gouder*. The *oor gouder* is informed of the alliance and his

approval is sought. The symbols of marriage for women are the gold *thali* and silver toe-rings. Bride-price is paid among the poor Kuruman, while dowry is paid among the affluent. The rule of residence is patrilocal. Monogamy is the marital norm among the Kuruman, though there are a few instances of polygyny where the first wife is barren.

The Kuruman cremate their dead in the cremation ground adjacent to the village. All the rites and rituals reported seem to be those of caste Hindus.

To the Kuruman, land is the main source of income. They supplement their income through casual labour, goat-rearing, government service and small business. Most of them are landowning families with marginal land holdings of an acre to ten acres. The younger and educated prefer settled jobs with regular income either in government or non-governmental organisations.

The Kuruman do not dwell in exclusive villages or settlements. They live in villages amidst other castes. So they do not have their own caste panchayat. They approach the affluent and respected members of the village community to resolve minor disputes; social control concerning the community norms and customs on a wider scale rests with the *oor gouder,* who belongs to a community higher in status to the Kuruman.

The Kuruman are Hindus. They worship the village deities, such as Mariamman, and deities of the wider pantheon. Their sacred specialists are from other communities. Each village hosts an annual festival of the local deity for which collections are made from each household, both in cash and kind. These festivals are common to all the communities in the village and people of the adjacent villages, also, participate.

Some Kurumans have converted to Christianity. Traditional intergroup relations have drastically changed now and water is acccepted and exchanged with all other groups. They actively participate in the traditional fairs and festivals. They visit the village temple along with other communities. The. Kuruman community has a few entrepreneurs, white-collar job-holders in government service and teachers. Patron-client landlord-tenant and cultivator-labour relationship exist.

The Kuruman boys and girls study upto the secondary school

level. Some go on to the postgraduate level. Girls tend to drop out from school after the secondary level, mainly because their parents prefer them to help with domestic and agricultural work. Boys drop out mainly due to poverty and the need to work. The Kuruman favour modern medicare. The affluent among them have opted for modern birth control methods, while the poor still fear them. They have access to civic amenities.

T.S. NATARAJAN

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KURUMBA

The word *kurumba* means 'doer of mischief'. And so the community name Kurumba, because its members practise sorcery and witchcraft. The various subgroups among the Kurumba are the Palu Kurumba or Halu Kurumba, Jenu Kurumba or Ten Kurumba and Betta Kurumba. The Palu or Halu Kurumba were once sheep-rearers and depended on sheep's milk for a living — hence they are called Palu or Halu (milk) Kurumba. The Jenu or Ten Kurumba once collected honey (*ten*). The Betta or Kattu Kurumba are those who largely depended on forest (*betta*) produce for their livelihood. Each subgroup has evolved as a distinct breeding unit or endogamous population.

The total population of the Kurumba in the Nilgiris is 4874 (1981 Census). This obviously includes all subgroups of the community. The majority of them are the Palu Kurumba. The Kattu Kurumba, who are the second biggest group, are predominantly seen in the Gudalur taluk of the Nilgiris, especially adjoining the border areas of Tamil Nadu and Karnataka. The Ten Kurumba are few in number and are mainly seen in the Kalhatti range of forests in the Ooty taluk. On the whole, the community perceives its distribution only at the local level.

The Kurumba have their own language, which they speak among themselves. They speak Tamil with outsiders and use the Tamil script. They also speak the language of the Badaga. Their Constitutional status is Scheduled Tribe and they are subcategorised as a Primitive Tribe of Tamil Nadu.

The Kurumba are a medium built people of dark complexion. Their average height is 154 cm (male) and 142 cm (female) and weight is 50 kg (male) and 40 kg (female) (Reddy, K.N., 1988). They are often delichocephalic to mesocephalic, possess mesorhine noses with mesoprosophic faces. (Shortt and Ouchterlony, 1868; Thurston, 1909). They belong to Dravidian and Protoaustraloid ethnic stock (Risley, 1915; Guha, 1955). Hb S or sickle-cell haemoglobins were present in more than 20 per cent of the Kurumba in the Nilgiris (Negi, 1975; Kirk, 1962). G/6/PD deficiency was also detected in the Kurumba of the Nilgiris (Saha, 1976). The protein and calorie contents

of the diets of the Kurumba show that they suffer malnutrition and undernutrition (Sen Gupta, 1960).

The Kurumba are occasional nonvegetarians, who eat pork. They were once good trappers of various forest animals and ate a good amount of meat. Consequent to Government restrictions on hunting, their consumption of meat has come down and have been forced to turn to locally grown or available vegetables. They consume vegetables moderately, wild roots and tubers in plenty, and fruits of the forest, seasonally. They take milk products occasionally. Their staple food is rice, supplemented by *ragi*. Groundnut oil is used for cooking. Men of all ages drink liquor. Women also drink liquor occasionally. They smoke *beedis*, and sometimes, cigarettes. A few Kurumbas use snuff.

Each Kurumba subgroup — the Palu Kurumba, the Ten Kurumba and the Kattu Kurumba — is endogamous. These social divisions are based on differences in social as well as economic levels. Thus, the Palu Kurumba claim superior social status over the other two groups. Each endogamous subgroup is further divided into exogamous units called clans, which regulate marriages. Thus, the Kurumba maintain endogamy at the subgroup level and exogamy at the clan level.

Monogamy is the marital norm among the Kurumba. However, polygamy also occurs. Girls marry soon after attaining puberty and boys when they are 18-20 years. Marital alliances are usually arranged by the elders. There are also marriages by mutual consent, through elopement and by intrusion. Consanguineous marriages, *i.e.* among cross-cousins, are very common. They avoid uncle-niece marriages. Levirate and sororate occur, but rarely.

A Kurumba marriage alliance is initiated by the bridegroom's family. The bridegroom's parents approach the girl's parents with gifts and discuss the prospective alliance. A token bride-price is paid. The wedding usually takes place in the bridegroom's house and is spread over a day. The *thali* or *mangalasutram*, bangles and toe-rings are the symbols of marriage. Divorce and remarriage are permitted, but only with the approval of the elders of the village. The reasons for divorce may be due to maladjustment, impotence or chronic

sickness. Either spouse can initiate divorce, but only the husband has to pay compensation to his wife or her parents. If there are children, they are the responsibility of the father. The Kurumba follow the patrilocal rule of residence and patrilineal rule of succession. They encourage neolocal residence.

Most Kurumbas live in nuclear families. Sometimes the family may also include a widowed parent of the husband and sometimes the young family of a married son who has not yet been able to build his own house. Newly married couples are encouraged to establish their own households. Joking relations are allowed between consanguineal and affinal relatives.

The Kurumba more or less follow the Hindu law of inheritance and succession pattern. The sons share the father's property. The family head is always a man, except in the case of a widow with small children. Landed property is alloted to married sons after they establish separate households, even during the lifetime of the head of the household. The eldest son of the family succeeds as the head of the family in the event of the father's death.

Kurumba women have a secondary social status compared to that of their men. However, they participate in economic and religious activities. They contribute to family income and control family expenditure.

The Kurumba observe both pre-delivery as well post-delivery rituals. Soon after the pregnancy is confirmed, they worship their family deity. Just before the completion of the seventh month of pregnancy, the expectant mother undergoes a ritual to ward off evil or spiritual possession. Birth pollution extends from 7-15 days. The child is named either on the 8th or 16th day. Its ears are pierced either in the 7th or 11th month. The earrings are provided by the maternal uncle.

Death among the Kurumba is treated as pollution. The bereaved family does not cook until the funeral is over. The Kurumba usually bury their dead. On the third day, they perform the milk ceremony. After 17 days, they perform the obsequies (*barasa*). Sometimes this ceremony is performed within three months or, even, a year. Ancestral worship is observed by the Kurumba.

The major economic resource of the Kurumba is the forest.

Since there are Government restrictions on collection of minor forest produce and hunting animals, their traditional occupations had suffered and the Kurumba are left with no other choice but to accept land as their main resource. Other than cultivation, they have also taken to wage labour in nearby tea and coffee estates. Land ownership among the Kurumba is a recent phenomenon. Though a certain amount of land has been allotted villagewise by the Government, individual proprietorship is also given and maintained. They also practise sorcery and witchcraft, as in the past. Many of them depend on working as estate labour, for which they get a meagre amount. There has been a rise in the number of daily wage labourers. Very few Kurumbas are employed in government service or in other organisations.

The mechanism of social control among the Kurumba is through the village council (*oor panchayat*) headed by the village headman, and the traditional caste council (*jati panchayat*). There is no chieftainship among the Kurumba. As the distance between two Kurumba villages is long, the traditional caste council (*jati panchayat*) is not in active operation. Most disputes or conflicts are settled by the *oor panchayat*, with the headman of the village. The village council deals with cases of adultery, elopement, disputes over land and disrespect for traditional norms. The guilty are punished with cash fines. Very rarely social boycott or excommunication is ordered. The *jati panchayat* is composed of elders belonging to different villages. They meet when the situation demands, usually in matters of divorce or elopement involving two villages.

The Kurumba practise their own tribal religion. The Kurbad Thai is their chief deity. Mariamma and Muneeswar are their village deities. The Kurumba have separate family deities, clan deities and also village and regional deities. They trace their own origin from their family and clan deities, such as Nagar (Yerkmalai) and Keavali, who are worshipped at life-cycle celebrations. Their sacred specialists are from their own community (*pujaris*). These *pujaris* also serve as sacred specialists for the neighbouring Hindu communities, such as the Badaga.

The Kurumba celebrate only a few festivals. Kurubad Thai Abba (festival of the chief deity), Koil Thiruval (Mariamma

festival) and Sankranti (ancestral worship). They are all celebrated once a year. Kurbad Thai festival and Koil Thiruval are celebrated to appeal for good rain, for the eradication of diseases and for the welfare of the people.

The Kurumba specialise in basket-making, broom-making and tattooing. Their oral tradition consists of folk-songs and folk-tales. They play on instruments such as the *peeka* (blower) and *arkol* and *jalara* (both wind instruments).

The Kurumba occupy the last rung in the social ladder of the tribal communities, below the Toda, Irula and Kota. However, they claim that they are equal to their neighbouring community, the Irula, in social status. The Kurumba accept water and food (raw or cooked) from all other communities. They do not enter into the houses of any community in the Nilgiris except the Irula.

Literacy and education levels among the Kurumba are very poor. The Kurumba children do not seem to go beyond the secondary school level for reasons of poverty, nonavailability of schools nearby and social reasons. The Kurumba favour family planning, and use both indigenous and modern methods of birth control. The Kurumba use both modern and traditional medicare. They have access to drinking water, but few of their villages are electrified. Some of the Kurumba have obtained bank loans and other welfare measures launched by the Government. Their self-employment is only in basketry. They have availed of various nutrition programmes for children, organised by Tribal Residential Schools and the Nilgiris Adivasi Welfare Association.

K.N. REDDY

Alu Kurumba

The Alu Kurumba are a subgroup of the Kurumba tribe, inhabiting the southern, southeastern, southwestern and eastern slopes, glens and summits of the Nilgiris. They are also called Pal Kurumba, Hal Kurumba and, more precisely, Kurumba. In fact, the Kurumba proper are Alu Kurumba. "When most reports mention the Kurumbas, they have in fact

in mind the two tribes of Palu and Alu Kurumbas, plus Betta and Mullu Kurumbas, but almost never Madugas and Jenu Kurumbas, or Urali Kurumbas. Even in the ethnographic literature, the term 'Kurumba' (as used for instance, by M.B. Emeneau, 1938) obviously refers mainly to the two `central' tribes of Palu and Alu Kurumbas" (Zvelebil, 1981). The Toda, Kota and Alu or Palu Kurumba regard themselves as the aboriginal inhabitants of the Nilgiri mountains (Emeneau, 1938). "The three tribes of the Todas, Kotas, and Kurumbas, along with the Badaga community, formed the internal Nilgiri system, the inner circle or inner infrastructure, at least since the beginning of the 17th Century till about a hundred years ago. The core of this system was the tribal interrelationship of the original Nilgiri tribes, Todas, Kotas and Kurumbas, who regard themselves as autochthonous in the area, and have lived in the mountains together for probably the past 2000 years or more" (Zvelebil, 1981).

The Alu Kurumba speak the Kurumba dialect among themselves, but speak to others in Tamil. They read and write Tamil.

The Alu Kurumba are nonvegetarians, but they do not eat beef or pork. Their staple food is *ragi*. On special occasions they eat boiled rice. Being food gatherers, they collect a wide variety of roots and tubers, eat plenty of jack fruit, papaya, Indian apple and other wild fruits. They collect honey from the wild combs and sell the surplus in the market. They use groundnut oil for cooking. Most Kurumba men drink toddy (*kallu*) or arrack (*sarayam*) regularly, and smoke *beedis*. Both men and women chew betel and tobacco.

The Alu Kurumba have different exogamous clans (*vaghapu*), *viz.* Nagara, Kaigeru, Irapane, Gobeda, Bellaga, Neeraga, Bellare, Masole or Macole and Ballku. The first four clans form one exogamous group and share a fictive brotherhood (*annan tambi mora*). The others form another group (*maman machan mora*). The two groups may intermarry. "Taking just the Alu Kurumbas as an example, we find that this tribe is divided into two exogamous, non-totemic phratries (*origa*) and these in turn are further divided into clans. One contains three names, exogamous clans, while the other has four. The Alu Kurumba practice cross-cousin marriage between any of the clans form-

ing each phratry. Within each phratry the clans share a fictive brotherhood, however, so that intermarriage is impermissible. Children always belong to the clan and phratry of their father. It occasionally happens that the Alu Kurumba enter into marriages with the Palu Kurumba or the Muduga, two other Kurumba tribes with a similar clan organisation. The latter two groups also regard each other as related, and they too intermarry with each other sometimes" (Kapp and Hockings, 1989). The Alu Kurumba have middle social status in the Nilgiris tribal hierarchy.

The Alu Kurumba adhere to community endogamy and clan exogamy. A man can marry his mother's brother's daughter or father's sister's daughter. Generally, girls get married between 16 and 18 years, and boys around 20. Mates are acquired through negotiation. Monogamy is the norm. The *thali*, toe-rings, nose-stud (*mukutti*) and earring (*kadikku*) are the marriage symbols for women. In the past, married men used to wear a ear-stud too (*kathu kadakku*). Bride-price (*parisam* or *honnu kattuvuthu*) is paid, in token cash and in heads of cattle. They follow the patrilocal rule of residence. Divorce is rare in Kurumba society. However, it is allowed for either spouse and compensation is given to the aggrieved party. If the wife seeks divorce, her parents return the bride-price. The children of divorced parents stay with their father. Generally, the reasons for divorce are adultery, maladjustment and cruelty. Both the widowed and divorced of either sex are allowed to remarry according to their choice. A widower can marry his deceased wife's younger sister.

Extended families are common among the Alu Kurumba, though there is a rise in the formation of nuclear families. Most Alu Kurumbas now live in substantial huts. "Hockings recently encountered a sizeable group of them, twelve families, living under a concrete road bridge at the foot of the hills. Thurston and Rangachari (1909) offer the only known photograph of Kurumbas living in a large rockshelter, although others were reported to have been occupied some fifty years ago (Noble, 1968). All the 19th Century ethnographers agree, on the other hand, that the Nilgiri Kurumbas were usually to be found in hamlets of four or five houses scattered amongst poorly kept garden plots (Shortt, 1868; Breeks, 1873). Noble's

(1968) study of Kurumba settlements emphasizes that the house plans vary greatly, and some are mere watch-huts besides their small fields. The dispersed settlement pattern is usually associated with the sloping terrain. Building materials are invariably local timber and grass thatch, unless a plantation or government agency has built a row-house for the tribal people of something more substantial, whether brick and mortar or corrugated iron sheets" (Kapp and Hockings, 1989). The Alu Kurumba follow the male equigeniture rule of inheritance. Succession is by the eldest son.

Alu Kurumba women assist their men in economic activities, besides attending to household work. Most women are plantation labourers and tea-pluckers. They graze their cattle on mountain slopes, collect roots and tubers as well as minor forest produce. Women contribute substantially to the family income and control family expenditure. They actively participate in social functions and religious activities.

The Alu Kurumba observe neither pre-delivery nor post-delivery rituals. However, on the seventh day after delivery a ritual bath (*theer thattuthu*) is given to the mother and child to terminate pollution (*theettu*). It is performed on the 11th day if the child is female. They invite the *jatikaran* (priest) for a nonvegetarian feast on the same day. In turn, he distributes sacred water to all the houses of the hamlet. The child is named (*peruvekkirathu*) on the 15th day or in the third month. They feed the child on the naming day with *ragi* gruel. The tonsuring ceremony is conducted before their *kuladeivam* (clan deity) or at a temple of Murugan, before the child is one or in its third year.

When an Alu Kurumba girl attains puberty, she is segregated from the house and kept under seclusion for thirty days in a separate hut. The maternal uncle of the girl erects the hut for her stay during the pollution period. On the thirtieth day, the puberty ceremony (*nerudadda*) is conducted. In the ceremony, the maternal uncle puts sacred ash (*vibhuti bottu*) on the forehead of the girl. He gives her new clothes. All invitees are served a feast and they bless the girl.

Marriages are arranged by negotiation among the Alu Kurumba. To settle a marriage alliance, the girl's parents accept betel leaves and nuts (*vethalai pakku*) from the boy's

parents at the time of the negotiation. Generally, rituals are conducted at both the bride's and bridegroom's houses, but the marriage is solemnised by the tying of the *thali* at the bridegroom's house. The bridegroom's family hosts the marriage feast. Their *jatikaran* officiates at the marriage.

The Alu Kurumba bury their dead and observe three days of pollution. They carry the dead person on a decorated bier in procession to the burial ground. Each hamlet has a separate burial ground and each family has a specific place in the burial ground. The eldest son of the deceased circumambulates the corpse three times with a honey (*andi*) pot before the burial. On the second day after the burial, they keep a measure (*padi*) of rice or *ragi* before the grave. After this, the sons shave their heads. The *jatikaran* conducts the death rites. The Macole or Masole clan people alone cremate their dead. They dispose of the bones and ashes in a nearby stream.

The Alu Kurumba are mainly dependent on the forest for their livelihood. Once they were hunters and food-gatherers. They collect a variety of wild roots and tubers, as well as minor forest produce, such as soapnuts, myrobolans, dye barks and honey, which they sell to traders in the plains for foodgrain, or to the forest department. At present, most of them are plantation labourers and tea-pluckers. Those who have land, cultivate tea, coffee and mulberry. A few have taken up sericulture, horticulture and bee-keeping with the help of governmental agencies and voluntary organisations.

Each hamlet of the Alu Kurumba has a panchayat (*oor panchayat*) with hereditary offices, *viz.* village head (*oor thalaivar*), honourable elder (*oor gowda* or *goundikar*), secretary (*oor maniyaga*) and a messenger (*kurudale*). Besides them, each clan has a priest (*pujari* or *jatikaran*) to officiate at rituals, fairs and festivities.

The Alu Kurumba are Hindus. Kapp and Hockings (1981), mention that "their religion is essentially an ancestor cult, and it is the ancestors, called Kurupadu Tayi ("Mother of the multitude" or "mother of the 'army' of the Alu Kurumbas"), whose benevolence and protection they invoke by regular offerings". The Alu Kurumba celebrate their tutelary deity (*kuladeivam*) Gumdevar (Eerundiyan) in April-May (*Chitthirai*)

with pomp and gaiety. Cattle and fowls are sacrificed to appease the deity at the fair. Lord Muneeswaran is another important deity. Their regional deity is Lord Murugan. They worship village deities such as Mariamma and Kaliamma. They celebrate Chitthirai Pongal, Thai Pongal, Deepavali and Adi Krithigai.

Some Alu Kurumba men have now learned basket-making. They sing a variety of folk-songs.

The Alu Kurumba accept water and cooked food from other subgroups of the Kurumba, Toda, Badaga and Irula tribes but not from the Kota. The Alu Kurumba children study upto the primary or secondary school levels. This is mainly due to lack of interest in education, and their own poverty. However, governmental agencies and voluntery organisations such as the Nilgiri Adivasi Welfare Association are now helping them to improve their education, health and economy. They depend mostly on indigenous medicines, but go to hospitals for serious ailments. They get their drinking water from springs, streams and, in a few places, pipes. They have benefited from the hill area development programme and the integrated tribal development programme.

V.S. DEEP KUMAR

Mullu Kurumba

Thurston (1909) refers to this community as Mullu Kurumbans, Aiyappan (1948) refers to them as Mullu Kurumbas and Luiz (1962) refers to them as Mulla Kuruman. Mullu Kuruman is the plural of Mulla Kuruman and this is the term used in Malayalam language. However all these refer to the same community, the Mullu Kurumba. They are categorised as a Scheduled Tribe.

The Mullu Kurumba believe that their ancestors were created by God Siva and Goddess Parvathi. They claim that they are the natives of the Wayanad District of Kerala, a part of which is now in the Nilgiris District of Tamil Nadu. They speak Malayalam, but those who live in the Nilgiris speak Tamil, particularly the younger generation who have studied in Tamil schools. The educated among them use the Tamil script.

The Mullu Kurumba men and women used to wear special types of ornaments, such as earrings, necklaces and armlets, but not any longer. The men used to tie their hair in a knot above the left ear, but nowadays they crop their hair. The married women continue to wear two lengths of cloth called *kachchai muri* and *kattu thundu. Kachchai muri* is a cloth eight cubits (cubit = appx. 18 ins) in length, folded double, and wrapped around the waist. *Kattu thundu* is about three cubits in length, wrapped around the torso and tied on the left shoulder. The girls of the younger generation wear skirts and blouses and some of the married women have started to wear saris and blouses.

The Mullu Kurumba are regular nonvegetarians, but do not eat beef. Rice, *ragi* and *samai* (a millet) form their traditional staple diet. They also eat pulses, roots, tubers and, occasionally, fruit. They use groundnut and coconut oils for cooking. They drink coffee or tea. Men drink liquor occasionally. They consume milk and milk products. They smoke *beedis,* cigarettes and indigenous cheroots. They chew tobacco and betel leaves.

The Mullu Kurumba have four matrilineal *kulams,* Vadakku, Villippa, Kathipa and Vengada. All these *kulams* are said to enjoy equal status and are exogamic. Their custom of not taking a bride from a *veedu* (house) to which they have already given a daughter in marriage, does not allow a man to marry his father's sister's daughter or his mother's brother's daughter. Their mode of acquiring mates were: *odi koodal,* marriage by elopement; *aatru kadavu,* when a boy forcibly takes a girl from the riverside where she is washing clothes and keeps her as his wife in his *veedu; veettu kadavu,* when elders negotiate and settle the marriage, and *mukku vazhi,* when a widow or divorcee marries another divorcee or widower, with the two meeting somewhere on the road, in between their *veedus.* The *thali* is the marriage symbol. The bridegroom's party has to pay *kaanan* (bride-price), *parisapanam,* a sum of money with which the bride can get a set of silver jewellery, and liquor. Apart from these, the *moppan,* the headman of the bride's *veedu,* will demand five rupees and a separate bottle of arrack for himself, to give his approval to the marriage, without which

the marriage cannot be conducted. After marriage, the girl lives with her husband. Divorce is allowed, with the approval of the elders. If the wife asks for a divorce, then she or her natal family or the man whom she wishes to marry will have to pay the money which her divorced husband had spent on their marriage. But, if the man divorces his wife, then he has no claim over this money. Divorce is sanctioned on grounds of unfaithfulness, adultery, cruelty or the wife's barrenness. In most divorce cases, the children accompany the mother, but they always have the right to return to their father's *veedu* at any time. Widows, widowers and divorcees can remarry.

Vertically extended and horizontally extended families used to be the norm among the Mullu Kurumba, but nuclear families are now on the rise. An avoidance relationship exists between mother-in-law, daughter-in-law and father-in-law and between brother's wife and husband's elder brother. A joking relationship is allowed between elder brother's wife and husband's younger brother, between a man and his wife's younger sister, and between grandchildren and grandparents. All the sons equally inherit the property of parents. The eldest male in the seniormost generation succeeds as the head of the family.

The Mullu Kurumba women work as agricultural labour and contribute to their family income. Women also take care of cattle. A few women rear chickens and this income is deemed exclusively theirs. They participate in all social functions and rituals that are conducted in the *veedu*, but they have no role in the mechanism of social control.

No pre-delivery ritual is celebrated by the Mullu Kurumba. A female relative is normally asked to stay with the pregnant woman until she delivers. On the ninth day after the birth of a child, the child and the mother are taken to the *deiva perai* (temple house) for worship. Her parents or elder brother or her clan member in the *veedu* bring a piece of new cloth in which they receive the child. Food, cooked in her husband's house, is brought and served on a leaf inside the *deiva perai* as an offering to the ancestors. Then they all leave for her husband's home, closing the door of the *deiva perai*. The food served on the leaf in the *deiva perai* in the name of the ancestors is eaten by the children later.

During the puberty attainment ceremony of a Mullu Kurumba girl, food is cooked in the *deiva perai* itself and the girl comes to the entrance of the *deiva perai* to receive her food. After that, all in the *veedu* are served food. This event is celebrated to let other Mullu Kurumba know that the girl is now eligible for marriage.

In the Mullu Kurumba community, the bridegroom's family usually takes the initiative in negotiating a marriage. When the boy's father goes to the girl's *veedu* to ask for her in marriage, he first goes and sits on the verandah of the *deiva perai*. All the negotiations between the boy's family and the girl's family take place in the *deiva perai*, where, too, the *parisapanam* is paid to the girl's father and the date for the marriage is fixed. On the day of marriage, the bridegroom's party arrives at the bride's *veedu* and takes the bride to their *veedu*. The bride is seated in the *deiva perai* after a bath, and wears jewels bought from the *parisapanam*. A mock fight takes place there, as though the bride is being taken away by force and the bride's people are resisting the effort. Then they are served food in the *deiva perai,* after which the bridegroom's party return to their *veedu* along with the bride. On the third day, the bride and bridegroom return to the bride's *veedu*, along with *pittu virundu* (packages of rice dishes), made in the *deiva perai* of the bridegroom's *veedu*. After reaching the bride's *veedu*, the couple relax and are entertained by songs and dances. The couple spend their first night in the *deiva perai* of the bride's *veedu*. The marriage feast is given by the bride's parents, but in case they cannot afford it, they spend the *parisapanam* on the feast instead of buying jewellery for the bride.

As soon as a person dies, his body is brought and laid in the *deiva perai*. The Mullu Kurumba send messages to all relatives and, soon after their arrival, the body is brought outside the *deiva perai*, bathed, dressed in new clothes and carried for burial. On the third day, they perform *pulaikuzhi* (pollution-breaking ceremony). The *kulakaran,* clan elder of the deceased, gives oil to all the members who assemble in front of the *deiva perai*. Women bathe and then bring water and cook food in the *deiva perai* itself. When the meal is ready, the food is served on a leaf in the name of the ancestors. The

kulakaran will also be served food inside the *deiva perai*. On the third day after the *pulaikuzhi*, they have the *kootathu koottal* ceremony. This ceremony signifies the spirit of the deceased joining the spirits of the ancestors. On this day, men go for hunting in the morning and women go for fishing. By evening, they cook fish curry, meat curry and rice. Soon after the meal is ready, they spread a number of leaves symbolising the ancestors and one more leaf in the name of the newly deceased. Food is served on all the leaves and the doors of the *deiva perai* are closed. Ten or fifteen minutes later, the doors are opened and children and others are allowed to eat the meal. They have curtailed these rituals to some extent because of the prohibitive expense.

Hunting and agriculture were once the main economic activities of the Mullu Kurumba men. Women subscribe to the economy through fishing, animal husbandry and hand-pounding paddy. The forest, which is close to the Mullu Kurumba settlements, provides not only game but also fibre to make ropes, bamboo to construct huts and seasonal fruits. They were expert bird trappers. Fishing is usually done by women, but occasionally men join them.

The Mullu Kurumba had four catergories of land for cultivation: *vayal*, wet land in the valleys where paddy was grown; *thottam*, land adjacent to the *vayal*, but often on the slope of a small hill or at a higher level, where cash crops, such as coffee, pepper, arecanut, ginger and turmeric, and fruits such as banana, jackfruit and mango, were grown; *uzhava parambu*, dry land, almost levelled on the slopes of the hills and cultivated with ploughs; and *attu parambu*, land on which they did shifting cultivation. Due to land alienation, most of the Mullu Kurumba have lost their lands and have become labourers on their own lands. Agricultural labour has become their main source of livelihood. They are paid in cash.

The council of elders of the Mullu Kurumba, called *mooppanmar koottam*, was once very powerful. The eldest male member of the *veedu* was called *porunnavan* or *moopan*. He headed the council meetings. If a Mullu Kurumba broke the norms of the community, for instance, by marrying within the clan or marrying a non-Mullu Kurumba, he was excommuni-

cated. But the authority of the council has waned over the last four decades. At present, the main function of the council of elders is confined to religious activities.

The Mullu Kurumba are Hindus. Every Mullu Kurumba *veedu* has a *deiva perai* (God's house) in it. This is the centre for the celebration of all life-cycle rites and rituals. They have no special office of priest among them to conduct the rites and rituals. The *veedu porunnavan* or *moopan* is present when the rites commence and the clan elders initiate the rituals. Secondly, they have started visiting Hindu temples to worship. They have also adopted some of the Hindu festivals, such as Vishu (Malayalam New Year's Day), Sankranti, Onam, Puththari (celebrating the harvest yields) and Mannalam. Uchchala is said to be the traditional festival of the Mullu Kurumba. Their leader, *appadu moopan*, has to decide on the date for this festival. On the day, everyone bathes in the morning, goes to the *deiva perai*, makes offerings in cash to the *veedu moopan* in the name of their deity Athiralanmar and then eats. In the afternoon, all the men start on a hunting expedition.

The Mullu Kurumba also believe in the power of the spirits of their ancestors. They try to appease these spirits every now and then by offering nonvegetarian food to them.

The Mullu Kurumba are experts in making different types of mats. The community has its oral tradition. Both men and women sing their traditional songs. Men dance the *atta kali* and *kol kali*. In the past, they used to play the *dhabbai* (a kind of drum) when they sang.

The Mullu Kurumba consider the Paniyan, Kattunayakan and Urali Kurumba as tribal groups lower than them in social status and, hence, do not accept cooked food or water from them. They have a separate burial ground. They visit the same religious shrines as other communities. Recently, a few have started going on pilgrimage to Palani and Sabarimalai.

The Mullu Kurumba are in favour of educating both their daughters and sons. Some of them have already become graduates. A few graduates have now became white-collar job-holders, teachers and professionals. Though they occasionally consult the *velichapadi* on their sicknesses, they also make use of modern medicare. They are in favour of family planning.

They get potable water from natural springs. There are also some taps in their settlements. Some Mullu Kurumbas have got loans under the Integrated Rural Employment Programme to buy cows. They have access to roads, post offices and electricity. They do not have any facility to irrigate their lands except some natural springs. They use organic manure.

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KUSAVAN

The Kusavan are also referred to as Kuyavan, Kumbar, Kosavan, Salivaganara and Kulalar. Udayar, Uadayan and Velan are their titles and they prefer to be called Udayar Kulalar or Kusavan Velar. The title Chettiar is also used by them. H.A.Stuart (in Thurston, 1909) states that Kusavan is said to be derived from the Sanskrit word *ku,* signifying earth, the material with which they work, and *avan,* a personal termination. This community has always been considered a service caste in Tamil Nadu. According to legends regarding the origin of the Kusavan, reported by Thurston (1909), they are the descendants of a Brahman father and a Sudra mother, created to make sacrificial earthen vessels. According to another legend, a boy who was beaten by his father got annoyed and went to the forest to do *tapas* (meditation). Lord Brahma was happy with his *tapas* and asked him what he wanted. The boy told him that he also wants to be a creator. Lord Brahma granted him the boon. Since then he and his descendants have lived as potters, creating pots.

According to the Census of India, 1901, the Kusavan numbered 355 in the then Madras Presidency. They speak Tamil among themselves and with outsiders.

The Kusavan are traditionally nonvegetarians, but they do not eat beef or pork. Rice, millets and *ragi* are their staple foods. They eat all locally available pulses, roots, vegetables and fruit. Groundnut and gingelly oils are used for cooking. They consume milk products. Some men take alcoholic drinks occasionally. Some smoke *beedis* and cigarettes. Both men and women chew betel leaves with arecanut and tobacco. Snuff is used by a few.

The Kusavan are divided into two major linguistic groups the Tamil-speaking Udayar and the Telugu-speaking Udayar. Both belong to the Siva *gotram.* Each of these two subgroups is endogamic.

In the past, pre-puberty marriages were practised, but now girls are married between the ages of 14 and 16, while boys marry around 20. The marriages of the Kusavan are usually

settled by negotiation. Monogamy is the norm. If a woman is sterile or if she dies, her husband remarries. The *thali* and toe-rings are the symbols of marriage. The couple live in the house of the husband after the marriage. The present informants are not aware of divorce in the Kusavan community. But in Thurston's account (1909) it is stated that divorce and remarriage are permitted by mutual agreement, and upon one party paying to the other the expenses of the latter's first marriage. Widowers are permitted to remarry. There is no taboo on junior sororate, but it is practised very rarely.

The Kusavan mostly have mixed extended families. There are usually only two or three Kusavan families in a village and most of their marriages are within their kin group. The sons inherit parental property equally and the eldest usually succeeds his father as head of the family.

Most Kusavan women are housewives and do not go out to work. They help their men in the traditional occupation of pottery. They participate in social functions and rituals, but do not participate in political activities. Even now, girls are not sent to school if the school is far away from the village, particularly after they have attained puberty. They have a low status.

Pre-delivery rituals such as *valaikappu* are performed by the Kusavan if a pregnant woman's parents can afford to give her the traditional gifts, such as a new sari, blouse, sweets, fruits and glass bangles. At the same time, the girl's husband's family should be able to give a meal to all those who attend the function. Post-delivery pollution is observed for eight or ten days. On the 9th or 11th morning, either the mother of the woman or her brother's wife gives her and the child a bath. The village Brahman priest is invited to do the *punyavachanam* (purificatory ritual). Then, all those who have assembled are served a vegetarian meal. In consultation with priest or an astrologer, a name for the child is chosen and given, but without any special ceremony. They hold the tonsuring and ear-boring ceremonies any time after one year, or before the child crosses ten years. On that day, they offer *pongal* (rice), milk and curd to their family deity.

Soon after a Kusavan girl attains puberty, her maternal uncle

is informed. He puts up an enclosure for the girl to be secluded in till the pollution ends. During these days the girl is given gingelly oil, a raw egg and a banana every morning and *puttu* (steamed rice flour) mixed with sugar or jaggery and coconut gratings during the day. These special dishes are given to her by her parents and also by close relatives. Pollution is observed for seven days and on the eighth morning she is given a purificatory bath. She is then dressed in a new sari and adorned with jewels. The married women apply turmeric and *kumkum* (vermilion) to the girl's forehead and wave a lighted oil lamp around her. This ceremony is called *nalungu*. After the *nalungu* a feast is served to the participants.

The Kusavan marriages are arranged through negotiations by elders. The boy's party bring a sari and blouse, fruits, sugar, betel leaves, nuts and flower on the betrothal day for the girl. Some give a pair of gold *kammal* (ear-rings) also to the girl. The girl's family serves a feast to all. On the evening prior to the wedding, the bride's party arrives in the village of the bridegroom, where the marriage is celebrated. They used to be served *panakam* (jaggery water in which dry ginger and cardamom powders were mixed) and buttermilk in the past, but nowadays they are served coffee and snacks. The bride and her relatives are then led to the venue of the marriage, accompanied by the *nadaswasam* (pipe) and *melam* (drum) music. In the morning, the bride and bridegroom take oilbaths and wear new clothes. A Brahman priest ties a yellow thread (*kankanam*) on the right wrist of the bride. The wedding takes place before the sacred fire (*homam*) and concludes with the bridegroom tying the *thali* around the bride's neck. His sister holds a lighted *kamakshi* lamp (oil lamp) while standing nearby. The priest then shows the couple the Arundhati star after which a feast is served to all invitees. The next morning, the couple goes to the bride's village, where their consummation ceremony is arranged.

In the Kusavan community, if the dead person is the eldest child of his parents, he is cremated. When his wife dies, she is also cremated. All others are buried in the *samadhi* (sitting) posture. Death pollution is observed for 15 days. On the second day after the funeral, milk is carried to the burial

ground and they worship the legendary king Harischandra first. They then pour milk on the buried spot. If the deceased was cremated, the bones and ashes are immersed in a river or in a tank. On the 15th night, the Kusavan observe the *nadappu* ritual in which the *thali* of the widow is removed. She then bathes and receives a sari from her close relatives. All the Kusavan go to the village tank on the morning of the 16th day to perform the pollution-ending ceremony known as *kariyam*. A Brahman priest conducts these rituals. *Pongal* (rice) is cooked there and offered to the deceased and cooked rice is offered to the crows. The Kusavan take only vegetarian food during these 16 days. On the 17th day, they prepare nonvegetarian food and offer it to the deceased in the *nadu veedu* (place of worship in the house) and then serve it to others.

Being traditional potters, land is the main economic resource of the Kusavan. Selection of clay and breaking the lumps is their first job. They have a circular, well-balanced flywheel, about three feet in diameter, at the centre of which they load the clay. Given a slight push, the wheel rotates for about two or three minutes and, during this time, the potter, with the help of his hands, skilfully moulds the clay lump into the desired shapes for utensils or earthen articles. The moulded products are baked later. Till a few decades ago, the poor in rural areas depended heavily on the pots of the village potter, for cooking their food. Now with the availability of aluminium and stainless steel vessels in the market, the demand for cooking pots has gone down. But the demand for pottery in the performance of rituals, for roofing tiles and flower pots have saved their traditional occupation from dying. In marriages, almost all communities need new pots and dishes for rituals. So also in death rituals. During festivals, such as Karthigai, many communities buy newly baked mud bowls to use as oil lamps. Thus, the products of the Kusavan are still in demand. In some villages, some of the men work as agricultural labourers and earn daily wages.

A few male members of the Kusavan community meet when there is a dispute and select a senior and experienced man among them as their leader. He inquires into the details of the case and advises or punishes the guilty.

The Kusavan worship Siva. They have family deities and worship their ancestors. Ponniamma and Mariamma are their village deities. Deepavali, Karthigai, Pongal and the Mariamman festival are celebrated by them.

The Kusavan accept water and cooked food from those communities whom they consider as equal or higher than them. In rural areas, they have their own funeral ground. The Kusavan visit religious shrines along with other Hindu communities. In some villages, the patron-client relationship, *i.e.* the potter giving his goods to the landlord and getting cash or grain in return, still prevails. There are Kusavan students in medical as well as engineering colleges. There are teachers and white-collar job-holders among them. In rural areas, Kusavan children are now being sent to school.

The Kusavan use both traditional as well as modern medicare. They are aware of family planning. They have access to civic amenities.

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LABBAI

The Labbai are a Tamil-speaking Muslim community, the members of which are traders and betelvine growers. The Labbai say that when their ancestors reached the south coast of India after a long sailing, they shouted out in ecstasy, "Labbika La Shaveeka Laka Labbaik", meaning "I am present, God". The native people, not understanding what they said, termed them Labbai and thus the term came to stand for the community. Thurston's (1909) account on the Labbai states that "about the end of the first Century of the Hijirah (the early part of the 8th Century A.D.) Hijaj Ben Gusaff, governor of Iraq, who was abhorred for his cruelties even among the Musalmans, drove some persons of the house of Hashem to the desperate resolution of abandoning for ever their native country. Some of them landed on that part of the western coast of India called the Concan, the others to the eastward of Cape Comorin. The descendants of the former are the Labbai."

The Labbai have no synonyms or titles. The community perceives its distribution at the interregional level. They are distributed throughout Tamil Nadu. There are two sects among the Muslims, namely Shias and Sunnis. The latter are those who follow the preachings of The Prophet, while the Shias are those who follow the teachings and path of The Prophet's son-in-law, Mohammad Ali. Among the Sunnis there are four subgroups, the Malikis, Humblis, Shafees and Hanafis, each following their own school of thought. The Labbai say that they follow the Hanafi school of thought.

They speak Tamil among themselves and also with others. Some of them speak and read Urdu. They use the Tamil script.

Till a few decades ago all Labbai males wore a turban or a *topi* (cap) and had beards too. But now, only a few of them observe this tradition. A few women still observe purdah (veil).

The Labbai are nonvegetarians, who eat beef but not pork. Their staple food is rice but they also consume wheat, *ragi* and millets. They eat all vegetables and roots. Groundnut and gingelly oils are used for cooking. They drink coffee, tea and milk and consume milk products. A few Labbai men do drink

liquor occasionally. Men smoke *beedis* and cigarettes. A few men and women use snuff. They chew betel leaves, arecanut and lime, with or without tobacco.

The Labbai do not strictly observe the rule of endogamy. Intercommunal marriages within the same religious group are common. However, they prefer to have marital alliances within the same community. They prefer cross-cousin marriages even though their religion permits parallel cousin marriages. A few parallel cousin marriages are also noticed in the community. Though polygamy is permitted, they are, by and large, monogamous. A blackbead necklace is the symbol of marriage for women. Labbai girls are married after attaining puberty. The elders usually arrange the marriages through negotiation. They give *dahez* (dowry) in the form of furniture, vessels and new clothes. The bridegroom's family is also expected to give some jewellery and clothes to the bride. Apart from these gifts, the bridegroom is expected to promise *mehar* to the bride for future payment. The promised *mehar* amount is recorded in the marriage register maintained by the *khazi* (priest) and this amount is to be paid to her before the death of her husband, or if he divorces her.

Divorce is allowed in the Labbai community. Either spouse can initiate divorce and, by saying *'talak, talak, talak'* three times in the presence of the *zamath* or *anjuman*, the divorce is approved. Divorce is sought on various grounds, such as adultery, insanity, barrenness and cruelty. After divorce, the children are the responsibility of the father. Widow remarriages are permitted.

There is no social division among the Labbai. Both nuclear and mixed extended types of families are found among the Labbai. They follow the patrilocal rule of residence and patrilineal descent. An avoidance relationship exists between mother-in-law and son-in-law. A joking relationship prevails between a man and his elder brother's wife, between a man and his wife's younger sister and between grandchildren and grandparents. Daughters also get a share in the property of their parents, though their share is less than that inherited by the sons. Succession is by the eldest son.

The Labbai women are expected to observe purdah or

burka. Usually they wear a black burka. It is said that women have a lot of freedom within the house. In well educated families, now, girls receive higher education and are allowed to work in offices. They are prohibited from entering the mosque (*mazeed*). They do *namaz* in their houses.

A pregnant Labbai woman is taken to her mother's house for the delivery of her first child. After the birth of a child, the mother is not allowed to read the Koran or say her prayers for about ten days. This period of pollution is called *chirthodakku* (small pollution). A ritual bath is given to the mother and child on the 11th day after delivery. Both the mother and child wear new clothes. Then she is allowed to resume her daily prayers (*namaz*). As soon as the child is born, the elders shout 'Allah hu Akbar' near the child, to enable these words to fall in its ears.

The Labbai observe the *aqiqa* (tonsuring ceremony) rite for a child either in its third year or in its fifth year. It is usually conducted at a *dargah* (tomb) or in the premises of the local mosque (*mazeed*) or in their respective residences. *Sunnathu kalyanam* (circumcision ceremony) is the next important ritual for a boy. The boy's family arranges a congregational feast on this occasion. In the past, circumcision was done by the local barber. He was paid some money or given a pair of new clothes and special food items for his service. Now it is done by a surgeon also.

When a girl in a Labbai family attains puberty, she is not allowed to say her prayers for ten days. During these ten days, she is given an egg and gingelly oil every day. On the 11th morning, she is given a ritual bath and then dressed well. The girl's family arranges a feast. This ritual is called *pooppu eithal* (attainment of puberty).

Generally, among the Labbai, a boy's parents initiate the marriage proposal. They celebrate *parisam naal* or *mangmi* (betrothal) at the bride's residence. On this day, the bridegroom's party brings a new sari, blouse, fruits, betel leaves, nuts, sweets and jewellery for the bride. The *mehar* amount is also fixed on this day. The *nikah* (marriage) ceremony is conducted at the bride's residence. The *khazi* or the local Imam officiates at the *nikah* ceremony among the Labbai. The

khazi records the names of the bridegroom and bride, the names of both the parents, the names of two witnesses and the amount of *mehar*. Later, he recites a portion (*fatiha*) from the Koran, asks the bridegroom to turn his face towards Mecca and makes him repeat the marriage contract (*nikah ka sigha*) in Arabic after explaining its meaning. Then he seeks the consent of both the bride and bridegroom for the marriage. The bridegroom's mother then ties the *kalamoti* beads around the bride's neck. Later, the *ghunghat* (veil) of the bride is removed from her face and the bridegroom sees her face for the first time. The consummation ceremony is held in the bride's natal residence.

The Labbai bury their dead. When a Labbai dies, they first take great care in cleaning the body and cutting the nails. The body is taken first to the mosque in a wooden coffin and then taken to to burial ground. While burying the corpse, the head is kept towards the north and the face towards the west. On the third day after the death, the family members go to the burial ground and offer food, sweets and flowers at the grave. The Labbai observe mourning and pollution for forty days. They celebrate the *chella* on the fortieth day. During these forty days, the local Imam, or a relative of the deceased, read Koran sitting in the place where the dead breathed his last. The fortieth day celebration is also called *chehlum*. The pollution period is called as *perumthodappu* (big pollution). During the *perumthodappu*, family members do not visit holy places, do not touch the Koran and are prohibited from celebrating social functions or festivals.

Land is the natural resource of the Labbai and is controlled by individual proprietorship. Their occupations are agriculture, business, government service and daily wage labour. Thurston explained that "Most of the Labbai are traders, some are engaged in weaving *corah* and others in (sedge) mats, diving at the pearl and chank fisheries of the gulf of Mannar". Further, he quoted Francis as saying, "The Labbai are often growers of betel... they also conduct the skin trade of the district... and are petty shopkeepers and engage in commerce at the ports. Their women are clever at weaving mats from the screw pine". As their women do not go outside to work,

they prefer jobs like weaving and *beedi*-rolling which can be done sitting at home.

The Labbai have a traditional community council or panchayat known as *zamath* and the meetings of the *zamath* are conducted in a public place or in the premises of the mosque. The *peeshmam* (Imam) or *moulvi* (priest) is the traditional head and a few Labbai male elders of the locality act as executive members in the *zamath*. Divorce and adultery cases are dealt with by the *zamath*. It also settles any disputes in the community. The *zamath* usually organises congregational prayers during the Ramzan and Bakrid festivals, and also arranges Koran *kwana*, and congregational feasts during the Sab-e-barat and Barah-wafat festivals.

The Labbai follow the tenets of Islam. They believe that Allah is the only God. Mecca and Madina are their sacred centres. They undergo *roza* (fasting) in the month of *Ramzan*, for about thirty days. Most of them perform *namaz* (prayers) five times a day. The wealthy families pay *zakat* (tax).

The Imam acts as a priest to the Labbai community. Their sacred specialists are from their own community. The Imam or *moulvi* officiates at the birth and death rites. The Imam or *moulvi* leads the Friday *kutba* and sermon at the mosque. They celebrate Id-ul-fitr on the first day of the month of *Shawwal* attending the congregational prayer at the *mazeed* or the *idgah*. The rich people in the community give alms to the poor and *fakirs*. The Labbai observe Bakrid, a festival of sacrifice. They offer *fatiha* in the name of their deceased relatives on this occasion. Muharram is an occasion of mourning for the Labbai. They celebrate Milad-un-Nabi (the birthday of the Prophet Mohammed) and commemorate the death of the Prophet on Aarawafat.

The Labbai accept food and water from other communities. They share burial ground with other Muslims. They share wells and water sources with other communities. Receiving and rendering of services, patron-client and cultivator-labour relationships prevail. There are businessmen, scholars, creative artists, white-collar job-holders, teachers, administrators, engineers and doctors, and political leaders at the village and regional levels.

The Labbai favour formal education for their boys and girls. Those who can afford it, send their children to college. They use both indigenous, traditional medicines as well as modern medicare. They are also in favour of family planning. They have access to civic amenities.

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LAMBADI

The Lambadi are known by different names in different parts of India. They are called Banjara, Brinjara, Lambadi, Laman, Lambani, Sugali, Charan, Mathuria and Bapri. The Madras Census Report, 1891, indicates that the Lambadi and Sugali are one and the same.

The Lambadi came down to southern India in historical times. Thurston (1909) quotes General Briggs as writing in 1813, "...Banjaras of the Deccan... travel about the country from one end of the Deccan to other ... came into south India along with the great armies of the Moghal Emperors when they invaded the south". He also quotes Mullaly: "Bhutyas form the principal class among the Lambadi and they move about with large drives of pack bullocks through the Ceded Districts occasionally visiting the southern districts. Before the advent of the railways in India, these Lambadis were the carriers of the country and they monopolised the trade in grain, salt etc." When their trade was ruined, many of them took to agricultural pursuits. They are distributed in the North Arcot Ambedkar, Dharmapuri and Coimbatore Districts. The Lambadi speak the Lambadi language among themselves and Telugu and Tamil with others.

The Lambadi are nonvegetarians. Their staple food is rice, *ragi* and millets. They eat pulses, vegetables, roots and tubers. They use groundnut and gingelly oils for cooking. They consume milk products. They are habituated to alcoholic drinks.

The Lambadi are divided into four patrilineal exogamous clans, *viz.* Rathod, Pamhar, Chauhan and Vadatya. Each clan consists of a number of exogamous lineages. The lineages are locally known as *gotra* and are named after the sons. The clan and lineage unity is expressed in several ways, such as marriage exogamy and organising ancestor worship. Marriage between the same exogamous clan and lineage is strictly prohibited.

The Lambadi family is characterised by patrilocal residence and patrilineal descent. Most families are nuclear. The father or husband is the head of the family. Sometimes a widow acts as the head of the family in the absence of a grown up son.

Inheritance of property is by male equigeniture and daughters have no right to parental property.

The Lambadi girls get married at an earlier age than the boys. The Lambadi have no concept of age. They calculate the age of a man by his physical make-up and capacity to handle household work and farm labour. A boy is considered of marriageable age when he independently works in the fields and chops wood. The age of marriage for a girl depends on her physical build, and the ability to fetch water from the well and do household work by herself. Menstruation is a criterion for the Lambadi to fix the age of marriage for girls. The contract of marriage depends on the capacity to pay the bride-price (*karare pesa*) and a man who gets his son married at a fairly early age enjoys a high status in their society.

Bride-price is usually given to the bride's parents, not only to meet the expenses of the marriage but also as a sign of compensation towards expenditure on bringing up the girl. The bride-price has to be returned to the husband if the wife asks for a divorce. The husband cannot claim the bride-price if he initiates the divorce. Sometimes, after payment of a part of the bride-price, the girl may refuse to marry the man. In such an event, the father has to repay the amount with a fine fixed by the local panchayat.

The status of women among the Lambadi is secondary, though they participate in all activities along with their men: in agricultural operations and as agriculture labourers on daily wage basis. They also collect firewood from the forest and sell it in nearby towns. Married women are allowed to visit the weekly markets, while unmarried girls are restricted to the house. Occasionally, a group of five to eight women from the poorer collectively go out to sing folk-songs and earn an income.

The Lambadi do not observe any pre-delivery rituals. According to their custom, the first delivery takes place in the husband's house. After the delivery of the first child, the woman visits her natal home where her parents offer her and the child new clothes. The birth of a male child is announced by drum beat. On the Full Moon Day of *Phalgun* (Holi Purnima), the father entertains the community with a sweet dish, inviting at least

one person from each family in the *tanda* (settlement). All the families where a male birth has taken place during the year, arrange such feasts (*dhond*). A newborn child is admitted into the community only after this ritual.

The Lambadi perform the tonsuring ceremony for their children in the temples of their *kuladeivam*. The Rathod, Chauhan and Pamhâr clans worship Balaji (Lord Sri Venkateswara) of Tirupati and make offerings (*prasadam*), while the Vadatyas sacrifice a goat to the goddess Kankali. Later, they cook and serve the meat of the sacrificed animal in a feast. Girl children have their ears pierced soon after the tonsuring.

A Lambadi wedding is a very lengthy affair. It is celebrated over eight days. Nowadays, however, they generally complete the marriage functions in three days.

In a Lambadi marriage, the foremost consideration is the settlement of bride-price. The proposal for marriage is initiated by the father of the bridegroom. He, along with some elderly persons and the *naik* (leader), pays a visit to the bride's house. Sundays and Wednesdays are always regarded as auspicious days for such visits. They do not take food or eat anything in the bride's house on this day. The parents of the girl then visit the *tanda* of the bridegroom and on the day of their visit they fix a day to go to a Brahman priest to match the horoscopes of the boy and the girl. If the horoscopes agree, the bride's father promises, in the presence of their caste panchayat, to give his daughter in marriage to the proposed boy. The bridegroom's party distributes betel leaves to the whole *tanda*. A considerable amount of liquor is consumed on the occasion and the expenses of the liquor are borne by the bridegroom's family while the food is served by the bride's family. The marriage is held at the bride's house.

When a Lambadi dies, the body is disposed of on the same day or the next day. They cremate the married, but bury the unmarried and those who die of epidemics. Those who commit suicide or are murdered are cremated. On the third day, they perform death rites and visit the cremation ground. Later, a sweet dish (*radli*) is served the participants at noon, under a tree outside the settlement. Death entails pollution for 13 days. On the 13th day, they sacrifice one or two goats and a feast

is served to all relatives. They also remember the departed soul annually and on festive occasions.

During their nomadic days, the Lambadi were animists (Dubois, 1936; Thurston, 1909). They strongly believed in ancestral spirits of the male line. These were worshipped regularly and it was believed that any lapse would lead to serious consequences for the living (Swanson, 1960). They worship bullocks on the occasion of Kar-hunnime and Deepavali. They also worship Sri Venkateswara and Hathiramji of Tirupati. The Lambadi celebrate Dussehra, Deepavali and Holi. The major sacred place for the Lambadi is Tirupati.

The traditional occupation of the Lambadi was rearing cattle, supplying and transporting of grain, salt and other foodstuffs from place to place. Nowadays, many of them have settled in villages and have resorted to agriculture.

Each Lambadi *tanda* has its own headman, known as *naik,* who not only directs their movements on their wanderings, but settles their disputes as well. The position of the *naik* is hereditary. However, the people are at liberty to disqualify him if he fails to win the confidence of the majority. The heads of all the *gotras* also assist him in religious and business activities. Besides the *naik,* they have a *karbari* (junior *naik*) and a *dhavae* (secretary).

Once a year, at the time of the Holi festival, each *tanda* celebrates the *poga* (turban/turban cloth) ceremony of their *naik.* All the inhabitants of the *tanda* subscribe and purchase a *poga* of thirty yards (red or white). They apply *bottu* (vermilion dot) on the forehead of the *naik* and tie the *poga* around his head. The *naik* then gives a feast to all his *tanda* people. The *tanda naik* always gets two shares of flesh when they sacrifice a goat.

The Lambadi send their children to school. They use both modern and traditional medicare. They are accessable to all civic amenities and have been benefitted by the various developmental programmes.

T.S. NAIDU

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LATIN CATHOLIC

In Tamil Nadu, the Latin Catholic are those Catholics whose rites are conduoted in Latin. They live in the Kanniyakumari and Tirunelveli and Chidambaranar Districts. Their counterparts in other districts refer to them as Roman Catholics. They are the descendants of local converts who embraced Christianity during the period of St. Francis Xavier's evangelism in southern India in the 16th Century. They speak Tamil and use its script. In Kanniyakumari District, they know Malayalam also. The Latin Catholic in Kanniyakumari District and the Shencottah taluk of Tirunelveli District are given the constitutional status of Backward Class.

The Latin Catholic are nonvegetarians, who eat beef and pork. Their staple food is rice. They eat all pulses, vegetables, roots and tubers. They use coconut oil for cooking. Men take alcoholic drinks occasionally. Some smoke *beedis* and cigarettes, chew betel and use snuff.

The Latin Catholic do not have any subgroups or titles. The Latin Catholic follow endogamy at the community level. Marrying the mother's brother's daughter and father's sister's daughter are practised with the permission of the Church. But sister's daughters are not married. Marriages are arranged by the elders through negotiation. Monogamy is the norm. Marriage symbols are the *thali* and ring. Dowry is given in cash and kind. They follow the patrilocal rule of residence after marriage. Divorce is not permitted. Widows and widowers can remarry.

There are both nuclear and extended families in the Latin Catholic community. Joking relations are seen among brothers-in-law and sisters-in-law and between grandparents and grandchildren. All children get equal shares in the parental properties and succession is by the eldest son.

The status of the Latin Catholic women is almost equal to that of men. They are consulted while decision-making regarding family affairs. Women participate in economic activities. They are employed in government and private service. They control family expenditure. They have a role in social functions and religious activities.

In the Latin Catholic community, the pre-delivery ritual *valaikappu* is observed in some places for pregnant women during the seventh or ninth month of pregnancy. Pregnant women are taken to their natal home for the first confinement. Delivery is conducted either in a hospital or at home. Observance of post-delivery pollution is not reported. The child is baptised within one year and is named on the same occasion. Confirmation is during adolescence. After Confirmation, Holy Communion is given to them. Baptism, Confirmation and Holy Communion are known as the sacraments.

Puberty rites (*sadangu*) are performed for the Latin Catholic girls on their attaining menarche. Nowadays, strict seclusion is not observed. They conduct a function on a convenient date, when the maternal uncle of the girl gives her a sari, blouse, cosmetics, fruits and flowers. The parish priest is invited to conduct prayers for the safety and well-being of the girl.

Marriage alliances are fixed by the Latin Catholic elders through negotiation. The wedding is conducted in the church. Prior to the wedding, the betrothal is conducted at the bride's residence. The couple exchange rings during the betrothal ceremony. After the betrothal, the banns are called in the church for three consecutive Sundays to find out whether there is any impediment or objection to the marriage. The marriage is solemnised in the church by the parish priest. The important rituals observed during the marriage ceremony are the exchange of vows by the bride and bridegroom, the joining of the right hands of the bride and bridegroom and reciting the marriage verses by the priest, the tying of the *thali* around the neck of the bride by the bridegroom and the registration of marriage. The consummation of the marriage takes place usually on the same night as the wedding.

The dead of the Latin Catholic community are buried in the church cemetery. When a death occurs, the message is passed on to relatives, friends and the parish priest. The church bell tolls the news. The dead body is bathed and dressed in new clothes. It is then placed in a coffin and prayers are said. Then it is carried in procession to the church for absolution. After absolution, it is carried to the cemetery for burial. No death pollution is observed, but the 16th day cer-

emony is conducted to mark the end of the mourning period. On the 16th day, they visit the grave and offer prayers. They conduct a prayer meeting in the house too. Some arrange a prayer service in the church as well. A memorial service is conducted annually. They observe All Souls' Day to remember their ancestors.

The Latin Catholic are employed in government and private services. There are agriculturists in the community. Fishing is a major occupation for many of them. There are agricultural labourers, industrial labourers and plantation labourers in the community. Some do business.

The church council administers the church. The parish priest is the head of the council. He is assisted in the administration of the church by the elected members.

The Latin Catholic form a major denomination in Christianity. The major festivals observed by them are Christmas, New Year's Day, Good Friday and Easter Sunday. They also observe the church festival, *i.e.* the feast of the saint to whom the church is dedicated. They observe Sunday as the holy day and Mass is conducted in the church every Sunday. St. Mary's shrine in Velanganni is their major sacred centre. Their sacred specialists are the parish priest who are appointed by the Bishop of the Diocese concerned.

The Latin Catholic accept and exchange water and food from other communities. They prohibit intercommunity marriages. They share wells and water sources with other communities. They receive the services of the Vannan and Ambattan communities. They maintain patron-client, landlord-tenant and cultivator-labour relationships. There are businessmen, white-collar job-holders, teachers, engineers, doctors, administrators, scholars and political leaders in the Latin Catholic community.

The Latin Catholic study upto college and postgraduation levels. There are some dropouts for economic reasons. They use modern medicare and favour family planning. They have access to civic amenities.

D. XAVIOUR

MADARI

The Madari generally lead a semi-nomadic way of life in Tamil Nadu. Some of them dwell in slums. They are Sunni Muslims belonging to the Syed group. The Madari also are referred to generally by the synonyms Pambatti (snake-charmer) and Modi Vittaikarar (juggler). The Madari, who constitute an occupational group, identify themselves with the Labbai of Tamil Nadu for official purposes. They are distributed in cities such as Madras, Madurai, Thanjavur, Thiruchchirappalli, Salem and Coimbatore. They claim to have migrated from Pune in Maharashtra generations ago. They speak Urdu among themselves and Tamil with outsiders. They use both the Perso Arabic and Tamil scripts. Being a semi-nomadic community, a small number of them, particularly the men, are conversant with Telugu, Malayalam and Kannada also.

The Madari are nonvegetarians, but do not eat pork. Rice is their staple food, supplemented by wheat, *ragi*, locally available pulses, vegetables and roots. Some men consume arrack and other alcoholic drinks. Smoking *beedis* is common among men. Chewing betel leaves, arecanut and tobacco with lime is a regular habit of both men and women. Tea, coffee and milk products are consumed by them.

As the other Muslim groups generally do not maintain marital alliances with the Madari, marriage within the Muslim Madari occupational group is the practice. Adult marriage is the norm. Mates are usually acquired by negotiation. Potential spouses include mother's brother's daughter and father's sister's daughter. Symbols of marriage for women include a black bead necklace (*karugamani* or *kalipoth*) and toe-rings. A token *mehar* is promised for future payment. Dowry in kind is paid. After marriage, patrilocal residence is the rule. Divorce and remarriage are permitted for both sexes. However, the incidence of divorce is rare among them. Both nuclear and extended families are common among the Madari. The eldest son succeeds as the head of the family after his father. Property is generally inherited equally by the sons.

The Madari women generally do not inherit any property, but, at the request of the parents, they are given a share

The Madari women generally do not inherit any property, but, at the request of the parents, they are given a share sometimes They are involved only in household duties. They do not contribute to the family income. They take part in social and religious activities.

The Madari marriage, death and festive occasions are attended by the Muslim brotherhood and the *zamath* of the locality. Whispering in the ears of the newborn (*azan*-prayer), tonsuring (*aqiqa*) and circumcision for male children (*sunnath*) are the important rituals of childhood. Circumcision is conducted in the house itself for boys before they are seven. Weddings (*nikah*) take place in the bride's home. The *hazarat* (religious head) of the bride's village presides over the ceremony with the *zamath* members. Before the ceremony starts, the bridegroom attends prayer in the mosque. All Muslims living in the neighbourhood attend the marriage and the subsequent feast. The dead among them are buried. Death rituals are conducted according to the tenets of Islam.

The Madari are mainly a landless community. Their traditional as well as present occupation is snake-charming and conducting magic shows in streets with trained snakes, mongooses (*keeripillai*), chameleons (*pachchondi*), scorpions (*thel*) and monkeys. A magical box (*maya petti*), tomtom (*udukku*) and snake basket (*pidari*) are the essentials for a public show. Snakes are sometimes caught by the Madari themselves in nearby forests or fields, or they buy them from the Villi or Irula. In case of snake-bite or scorpion-bite, the intake of a herbal root called *siriyanangaiver* or *nagathaliver* immediately restores the affected person. This herbal medicine is collected by them in the forests for their personal use. Some of them also practise hypnotism, numerology and palmistry. They also have customers who visit their huts. Women do not involve themselves in any of these economic activities, but children accompany their fathers. In this way, the children are also trained in the profession.

The Madari do not have any traditional community council. Social control is exercised by the Muslim *zamath* of the area in which they live.

The Madari profess Islam and strictly adhere to its tenets.

Muslim *pirs* such as Qadar Vali of Nagore in Tamil Nadu and Mohaboob Vali of Baghdad are worshipped by them. The former is worshipped in the month of *Ahar*, by hoisting a flag and offering food to the poor, while the latter is worshipped in the same manner in the month of *Qadar Maina*. On each occasion, sandal paste kept in an earthen pot considered sacred (*sandana koodu*) is carried in procession and sprinkled on the tomb and flag. On the first Thursday of every month, those who live in and around Madras visit the Abdul Rahim *dargah* (tomb) in the Guindy area. During these festivities, they use the *ghaira* (a drum) and *dol* for music and sing religious songs.

The Madari accept food and water from all Muslims. With other non-Muslim communities who do not eat pork, the Madari maintain commensal relations. Public amenities are shared by them with others. In the slums where some of them live with others, Madari men are generally referred to by others as 'bai'.

Those Madari who lead a semi-nomadic or settled life in cities and towns send their children initially to the *madarasas* where they are given religious education (*markka kalvi*)). Some of the boys study up to matriculation later, but the girls drop out from studies after the primary education, due to social reasons. They make use of both traditional and modern medicare.

C.R. SATHYANARAYANAN

MADHWA BRAHMAN

The Madhwa or the Madhava Brahman are the followers of the saint Madhwacharya. They wear their sect mark, the *gobi chandra namam.* The Madhava speak Kannada, their mother tongue, in their homes but with outsiders they speak Tamil. Some of them speak Marathi also. It is believed that some of the Madhwa Kannadigas are recent converts from Karnataka or Andhra Smarthas. It is also said that Pennaththurar, a subsect of the Madhwa, were originally Tamil Brahmans who became Madhwas. As a rule, all male Madhwas must brand their right arm with a disc (*chakra*) and the left arm with a conch shell (*sangu*). This is usually done after the *upanayanam* rite. The Madhwa also stamp *mudras* (marks) with *gobi* paste (white kaolin) daily on various parts of the body.

The Madhwa Brahman are pure vegetarians. They do not eat even onion, drumstick and brinjal. Their staple food is rice. They eat all kinds of cereals, tubers, roots, greens and fruit.

The Madhwa community consists of six subsects. These are the following territorial divisions: Aruvalu, Badanadu, Aruvaththu Vokkalu, Pennaththurar and the Desasthas who speak Marathi. Marital alliances take place between the different sects of the Madhwa. They observe exogamy at *gotra* level. Their *gotras* are Vasistha, Kausika and Viswamithra. They have four *maths* (religious institutions): at Vayasaraya, Sumathendra, Mulabagal (Mysore), Uttaradi (South Canara). There used to be many more *gotras* among them, but the Madhwa are unable to recall them now and consider education a more important criterion for marital alliances than territorial divisions.

Both nuclear and joint families exist among the Madhwa. The younger generation prefer to live as nuclear families. They follow the Manu *dharma* as a rule. Inheritance and succession is patrilineal, while residence is patrilocal. All sons get equal share in the ancestral property. The eldest son succeeds as head of the family.

The Madhwa women have a secondary status compared to men. They participate in social, ritual and religious activities

along with their men. The head of the household manages financial matters while the woman restricts herself to domestic chores. Women, however, work outside and contribute to family income. The older women usually wear the *madisari* — a nine-yard sari with *panchakatcham* (a special way of pleating). The younger women prefer to wear the modern sari.

For their life-cycle rituals, the *samskaras,* the Madhwa follow the principles laid down in the Madhwa *shastras* — commentaries by various saints and sages. When a Madhwa woman is pregnant, the *valaikappu* ritual is performed in her fifth or sixth month. Birth pollution is observed for 11 days and the *punyavachanam* (purificatory ceremony) is performed on the 11th day. The father names the newborn after his paternal grandfather. The young parents are gifted new clothes and a male child is given an *aranakayar* (waist chain), while a female child is given armlets by the maternal grandparents. On the *punyavachanam* day, honey is placed on the tongue of the child. All males have to undergo the *upanayanam* rite by the time they are 11 years old. Puberty rituals are performed on the 11th or 13th day. The girl is given a head bath and *nalungu* (anointing of pastes) is done. The maternal uncle gives gifts to the girl (*thai maman varisai*).

The Madhwa boys are married after they are 20 years old, girls after 18. Before the marriage, the engagement ceremony (*nichatartam*) is celebrated. The *lagna patrika* (marriage invitation) is written and read out. New clothes and other personal articles are given to the bridegroom. The bridegroom's family gifts a silk sari and jewellery to the bride. *Janavasam* (bringing the bridegroom in procession to the marriage hall) is performed on the day before the marriage. The bride performs Gowri Puja. *Nalungu* is observed for the couple. *Kasi yatra,* or mock pilgrimage, is performed, and the bride is formally handed over to the bridegroom (*kanyadanam*) by her father. The *upanayanam* is performed for the bridegroom thereafter. A *kankanam,* or wrist thread, is tied to the wrists of the couple to signify marital status. Then the *mangalyam* or *thali* is tied around the bride's neck by the bridegroom. The *mangalyam* is a round gold pendant studded with a red stone and *karimani* (black beads). The *sapthapadi,* or seven steps, are taken by the

couple. The consummation of the marriage is at the bridegroom's residence.

The Madhwa cremate their dead. The next day, the *pal*, or milk, ceremony is performed. The ashes are collected and taken to the holy Ganges after ten days' mourning. On each of these days, a *karma* is performed. On the 11th, 12th or 13th day, a vegetarian feast is served. On the tenth day, the widow's *thali* is removed and her head is tonsured. She is made to wear a white sari and is prohibited from wearing flowers and *kumkum*. Some Madhwas do not resort to the tonsuring of widows nowadays. For unmarried males, a *poonool* ritual or thread ceremony is performed as part of death ritual. Annual *shradhas* (ancestral worship) are performed. The Brahman usually have a separate cremation ground. Death pollution usually lasts for a year.

The Madhwa follow the principles laid down in the *Manu dharma*. They have a meeting place called the Madhwa Sangha. The people of the community are enjoined not to deviate from their shastras. Each Madhwa belongs to a *math* and therefore is religiously controlled by his saint. Theft, rape and other criminal acts are taken to the courts. as there are no caste panchayats in their community. The Madhwa Sangha looks after the general welfare of the Madhwa community and upholds the principles of Madhwacharya.

The Madhwa have a high literacy level. Both men and women are educated and work in white-collar jobs. Elderly Madhwa women, however, prefer to stay at home and do not approve of working girls.

Being followers of Madhwacharya, the Madhwa Brahman are Vaishnavites. They worship Lords Anjaneya and Krishna as family deities. They have sacred saints such as Raghavendra Swami. The Madhwa as a rule worship only Lord Vishnu and visit only Vaishnavite temples. Their major festivals are Ugadi, Adi Amavasai, Deepavali, Ayudha Puja, Saraswathi Puja, Navaratri, Pongal, Sri Ramanavami, the Arathanas and Madhwa Navami. Women perform Devi Puja on Fridays and also Varalakshmi Puja.

In the past, the Madhwa Brahman would not eat in Saivite houses or intermarry with them. Nowadays, these differences

have disappeared. There is now intersect marriages between the six subdivisions, but as a rule the Madhwa prefer to marry among themselves. Due to education and public influences, the Madhwa now mix freely with other communities.

The Madhwa prefer to send their children for higher education. They use modern medicare and favour family planning. They maintain patron-client, landlord-tenant and cultivator-labour relationships with various castes. They enjoy all civic amenities.

P. KAMALESH KUMARI

MADIGA

Madiga means the children of Matangi or Durga. The Madiga are a Scheduled Caste. Their present distribution is restricted to Chengai-MGR, Coimbatore, North Arcot Ambedkar, Salem, Tiruchchirappalli and Madras Districts. They are also called the Chakkiliyan, a leather working caste group. In Telugu-speaking areas they are better known as Madigollu. Regarding their origin, Thurston (1909) reports that the Madiga sometimes call themselves Jambavas and claim descent from a Jambu or a Adi Jambuvadu, who is perhaps the Jambuvan of the *Ramayana*.

One passage by Stuart, which appeared in the Madras Census Report (1891) reads, "The Madiga claim to be the children of Matangi. There was formerly a Matanga dynasty in the Canarese country, and the Madiga are believed by some to be descendants of people who were once a ruling race. Matangi is a Sanskrit name for Kali, and it is possible that the Madiga once played an important part in the worship of the goddess. The employment of Chakkiliyans and Madiga women in Shakti worship gives some colour to this supposition".

The Madiga of Tamil Nadu speak Telugu among themselves and Tamil with others. They use the Tamil script. Their total population, according to the 1981 Census, is 6195.

The Madiga are regular nonvegetarians, who eat both pork and beef. They eat all varieties of vegetables, cereals, pulses, roots and tubers. Rice is their staple food. They use groundnut oil for cooking. They consume alcoholic drinks like toddy, arrack and brandy. Men regularly drink, while women drink occasionally. A large part of their earnings finds its way to the liquor shops. They drink tea and coffee, and consume milk products. Men smoke *beedis* and cigarettes. Both men and women chew betel leaves and arecanuts.

A large number of endogamous and exogamous subdivisions were reported to exist among the Madiga of South India. Thurston (1909) mentions some of the more important endogamous subdivisions among the Madiga as follows:

Gampa *dhompti* — basket-offering
Ginna or thel *dhompti* — tray or cup-offering
Bhumi *dhompti* — earth-offering
Chatle *dhompti* — winnowing basket-offering
Sibbi *dhompti* — brass vessel-offering
Chadarapa *dhompti* — square space on the ground-offering.

These subdivisions are based on the way in which the members of each *dhompti* offer food to their gods during marriages, *e.g.* a Gampa *dhompti* places it in a basket, a Bhumi *dhompti* on the floor. Each subdivision possesses many exogamous groups, of which the following are examples:

Belli — silver,
Chinthala — tamarind
Chatla — winnowing basket
Darala — thread
Emme — buffalo
Gavala — cowry shells
Jalam — slowness
Kambha — post
Kappala — frog
Kalahasti — a town
Kaththe — donkey
Kaththi — knife
Kudumala — cake
Kuncham — tassel
Midathala — locust
Mallela — *or malli* — Jasmine
Nanuru — four hundred
Pasula — cow
Ragi — *Eleusine coracana*
Sikili — broom
Thela — scorpion

However, the present author has come across only a few exogamous divisions like Gantala, Kudumula, Damarla and Kondeti in Tamil Nadu. These precede the individuals names and are known as *intiperlu* (house names).

The two important divisions among the Madiga are the Thoti and the Pattilla. While the former is chiefly engaged in scavenging work, the latter specialises in leather craft. The Thoti generally consider the Pattilla as a socially inferior group on account of their occupational involvements. The Madiga are aware of the *varna* system and believe that they belong to the Sudra fold.

The Madiga practise endogamy at the subdivision level, *i.e.* members of the Thoti and the Pattilla groups do not intermarry. They observe exogamy at the *intiperlu* (surname) level. These *intiperlu* descend through male lines and all women acquire their husband's surnames after marriage. As individuals of an *intiperlu* are considered members of the same family, a mate has to be sought from another division. Consanguineous

marriages are encouraged and preferred. Marriages between uncles and nieces, maternal or paternal cross-cousins are the most frequent types among the Madiga. Girls marry after they attain puberty, usually between 14 and 18 years. Boys are married between 17 and 24 years. All the marriages are arranged through negotiations. Monogamy is the norm but polygyny is permitted with social approval in case the first wife is barren. Women wear the *thali*, and *mettelu* as symbols of marriage. Earlier, bride-price was paid. This has been replaced by dowry. It is given both in cash and kind.

Patrilocal residence is the rule among the Madiga after marriage. Either husband or wife can initiate divorce. They can get separated with social approval, on grounds of adultery, barrenness, lack of male issue, maladjustment, impotency, chronic sickness or cruelty. Children are the responsibiity of both parents. Remarriage is permitted for both widows and widowers.

Most Madiga families are mixed-extended in nature. A few are nuclear in nature. In this community, no avoidance or joking relationships are practised. Ancestral property is divided equally among all the sons and succession is by the eldest son.

The Madiga women participate in rituals and social functions. In rural areas, the women work as agricultural labourers. Though women contribute to the family income, control family expenditure and have decision-making powers within the family, their status remains secondary to the men.

The pre-delivery ritual *seemantham* is performed in the seventh or ninth month of a Madiga woman's first pregnancy. The pregnant woman is brought to her parental home for the ritual. She is given new clothes, flowers and bangles to wear, and delicacies to eat. The women sing folk-songs to entertain the pregnant woman. In return, she offers *thamboolam* (betel leaves and arecanuts), *kumkum* (vermilion) and flowers to every woman invitee. Pollution is observed after delivery. On the 9th or 11th day, *purudu* (purificatory ceremony) is performed to terminate pollution. The children are usually named at the age of three or five months after consulting an astrologer.

Tonsuring is not considered a must among the Madiga. Whenever the family is on pilgrimage to sacred shrines at Tiruttani or Tirupati, everyone has his or her head shaved.

On hearing the news of a girl's attainment of puberty, the maternal uncle of the girl comes and erects a thatched structure with fresh green coconut leaves, just outside her home. She has to confine herself to this hut till 9th or 11th day when her relatives gather and the women give her a ceremonial bath after *nalugu* (anointing with various pastes). She wears new clothes. A nonvegetarian feast is offered to all invitees.

Madiga marriages are said to be conducted with much brawling and noise, owing to the quantity of liquor consumed on such occasions. Among the Madiga marriage is not to be consummated until three months after its celebration. This is apparently because it is considered unlucky to have three 'heads' in a household within a year of marriage. Nowadays, a Brahman priest officiates at a Madiga wedding, which is conducted either at the bride's residence or at a nearby temple. On this occasion, a vegetarian feast is given by the bride's parents. The consummation ceremony is at the bridegroom's residence, preceded by a nonvegetarian feast.

Of late, all the dead of the Madiga community are buried in a lying position. The dead are carried on a *padai* (bier) decorated with flowers. The procession is led by the eldest son (or father in case they are unmarried), who will perform the last rites. A *Jangam* officiates at the burial. They observe pollution till the day of *peddakarma,* which is performed on the 11th or 21st day. A nonvegetarian feast is offered to the relatives after sacrificing an animal (pig) to please the soul of the dead. Such elaborate rituals are uncommon in case the deceased is a child or an unmarried person.

The Madiga are mainly a landless community. In the rural set-up they are employed as agricultural labourers and mainly depend on working with skins and hides. Elsewhere they have entered a variety of jobs ranging from the socially degraded scavenging to respectable government service. The Madiga are also employed in industries, private organisations and are self-employed as well. They mainly make footwear, purchasing the required cured leather from the market. Quite a number

work in the tanning industry. They have direct links with the market and also use middlemen.

The Madiga's caste panchayat functions with five members. All of them are elected by voice vote and are known as *peddamanushulu.* The main function of such a council is social control through cash fines and social boycott. The list of offences includes adultery, rape, elopment, theft and insult to the panchayat. In case of rape and elopment, marriage is sanctioned for the two involved, on payment of a heavy fine by the man. Theft, if proved, is penalised with a cash fine. Divorce is sanctioned in cases involving adultery on payment of cash fines. The amount so collected is utilised for the benefit and welfare of the community.

The Madiga are Hindus. They worship Matangi, Ellamma, Katamma, Dandhmari, Muneeswara and others. They are by religion Vaishnavites, Saivites and Sakteyas. They sacrifice buffaloes to ward off epidemics. The sacrifice has been described in great detail by Thurston (1909). In some localities, during epidemics, the Madiga celebrate a festival in honour of Mariamma, for the expenses of which a general subscription is raised to which all castes contribute. A booth is erected in a grove, or beneath a *margosa* tree, within which a decorated pot (*karagam*) is placed on a platform. The pot is usually filled with water, and its mouth closed with a coconut. In front of the pot, a screen is set up, and covered with a white cloth, on which rice, plantains and cakes are placed, with a mass of flour, in which a cavity is scooped out to hold a lighted wick fed with *ghee* or gingelly oil. A goat is sacrificed, and its head, with the flour and lamp on it, is placed close to the pot. The food, which has been offered to the goddess, is distributed. On the last day of the festival, the pot is carried in a procession through the village, and goats are sacrificed at the four cardinal points of the compass. The pot is deposited at a spot where three roads meet, and a goat, pumpkins, limes and flowers are offered to it. Everything, except the pot, is left on the spot. Such elaborate rituals are rarely performed nowadays. Most Madigas now worship Mariamma, Venkatesulu, Murugan and visit all shrines. They celebrate Sankranti, Ugadi, Adi Krithigai, Vijayadasami and Deepavali.

Rev. M. Huizinga reports (Thurston, 1909), "It may be mentioned that nearly ten per cent of the Madiga are nominal Christians, and in some parts the Christians form over half of the Madiga population. This changes their habits of life and also their social position." More Madigas have now converted to Christianity in Tamil Nadu. But Hindus and Christians freely intermarry.

The Madiga make their own drums, the *dolu* or *palaka*. They are an excellent drummers. They accept water from all other communities except from the Parayan, Thoti and Mala. They share cremation grounds with castes similar to theirs. In traditional festivals they have the specific role of beating the *dolu*. Other castes engage these drummers compulsorily to accompany the dead body to the burial ground in procession. Through this, and by making footwear, a patron-client relationship exists with other castes.

The Madiga send their children to school, but they rarely allow the boys to go to college. Boys drop out from studies as they have to support their families. Girls study only up to the primary level and, soon after attaining puberty, are married off. The Madiga use both traditional and modern medicare. They favour family planning. They have access to civic amenities. Most of them have benefited under the rural development and self-employment programmes.

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MAHA MALASAR

The Maha Malasar also call themselves Malai Malasar and Malai Arasar. The local people address them as Kummatti Makkal. Thurston (1909) did not deal with the Maha Malasar separately, but mentions them in his account of the Malasar. But the Census of India (1961) in its ethnographic notes on the Scheduled Tribes expresses the view that the Malasar are different from the Maha Malasar and identified the Maha Malasar as a separate tribe with distinctive physical features.

The Maha Malasar are identified as a small tribal community at the local level in Tamil Nadu and are found only in the Pollachi and Udumalpet taluks of Coimbatore District. Most of them live in the Indira Gandhi Wild Life Sanctuary in Pollachi taluk. According to the 1981 Census, the total population of the Maha Malasar in Tamil Nadu was 239.

The Maha Malasar believe that they were the original inhabitants of Kongu Nadu, which is the present Coimbatore District. The Maha Malasar inhabit the densely forested hilly terrain of the Western Ghats at an altitude of 6000 feet. The forest where the Maha Malasar live with other tribal communities, such as the Malasar, Muduvan and Kadar, was recently converted into a wild life sanctuary. Constitutionally they have been recognised as Scheduled Tribe. The Maha Malasar have their own distinct dialect, which is related to Malayalam.

The Maha Malasar have no separate community identification markers. The men wear short dhotis. They cover their bodies with shirts or banians. The women wear coloured saris with the *pallu* of the sari thrown over the left shoulder. Only young women wear blouses.

The Maha Malasar youth cut their hair while older men keep it long and tie it in a tuft. The women part their hair in the middle and knot it at the back. They pierce their earlobes and plug the holes either with scrolls of palm leaf or with round, wooden pieces. The women wear plenty of silver chains and glass beads around the neck. They wear thick anklets called *thandai*. They had a tradition of tattooing their bodies. The

Maha Malasar huts are built on precipitous slopes, not easily approachable by elephants, and so as to escape from the violent westerly winds.

The Maha Malasar are strict vegetarian and their staple foods are rice and *ragi*. They occasionally consume cereals, millets and pulses. Their vegetable consumption is moderate. They use groundnut oil for cooking. During the lean season, they subsist on certain edible forest roots and tubers, which they boil or roast. They eat seasonal fruits such as jack, mango and wild berries. Both men and women occasionally drink alcoholic drinks. They chew betel.

The self-perception of the Maha Malasar at the local level is high. Other tribal communities also regard them highly because of their practice of pure vegetarianism.

The Maha Malasar live only in nuclear families. A joking relationship is observed between sister-in-law (brother's wife) and brother-in-law (husband's brother), between sisters-in-law (wife's elder and younger sisters), between brothers-in-law and to a greater extent between grandparents and grandchildren. An avoidance relationship is observed between sister-in-law (younger brother's wife) and elder brother-in-law (husband's elder brother) and to some extent between daughter-in-law and father-in-law. The rules of inheritance do not exist, as they hardly possess any property. Yet, when questioned, the Maha Malasar said that their inheritance and succession are through the male line.

The women of Maha Malasar have a status equal to their men. They participate in all social, ritual and religious activities along with the men. Even in political activities the women are represented by their leader, *ponnu thalaivi*, who has an important role in the mechanism of social control. Women also participate in economic activities and have decision-making powers.

Their life-cycle rituals are simple. The Maha Malasar observe pollution during the periods of post-delivery, puberty and death. During menstruation, women live in a separate shed, called the *taniyakoodu*, for three days.

The pregnant Maha Malasar woman is taken to her natal home for the first and second deliveries, during either the

eighth or ninth month. Most of them deliver their children at home, with the help of an experienced midwife. They observe birth pollution for seven days. On the seventh day, the mother and the child are brought into the house after being given a bath. On this occasion, they prepare *payasam* (sweet dish with jaggery) and serve it to their close relatives. The naming of the child usually takes place 28 days or three months after birth. A child is named after a deity. Girls have their earlobes bored in their third year. Pubertal rites are performed when adolescent girls attain menarche. A separate hut is constructed by the girl's maternal uncle and the girl is ushered into it. An old woman keeps her company for 27 days. On the 28th day, the girl is taken home after a bath. The maternal uncle and aunt give her a new sari and sweets. A feast is given to the relatives.

The Maha Malasar are an endogamous group and they do not have exogamous divisions. They follow cross-cousin consanguinity as a major rule of marriage. They also marry their elder sister's daughter. Polygyny and junior sororate are allowed in case the first wife is infertile, but monogamy is the norm. Girls are married before attaining puberty and the modes of acquiring mates include capture, elopement, service and mutual consent. It is said that even now it is the practice for the boy to live in the girl's house for some time. This may extend from a month to a year and if the parties are satisfied the marriage is agreed to. The age at marriage varies from 13-16 years for girls and from 18-22 for boys.

In the past, weddings were celebrated for four days. Now it is reduced to two days. Customarily, the wedding is held at the bride's residence. The Maha Malasar consider Wednesdays and Mondays auspicious for marriages. Giving a token *pariyam* (bride-price) is prevalent. The bridegroom ties the *thali* around the neck of the girl. A feast is given by the bride's parents on the occasion and, after feasting, they indulge in *aatam* (group dance) which lasts the whole night. The consummation ceremony takes place the next day at the bride's home. They live in the neolocal residence after marriage.

Divorce cases are not found among the Maha Malasar, but their community allows for divorce or desertion on grounds

of barrenness, chronic sickness or impotence. Divorce cases are decided with the consent of the *mooppan* (headman). Divorce compensation is given to the aggrieved party. Either spouse can initiate divorce, but children are the responsibility of the father. A divorced woman can remarry any person within the community under the *rendantharam* custom. Widows are allowed to remarry by the *maru kannalam* ritual.

The Maha Malasar bury their dead in the forest, placing the head towards the east. The corpse is bathed and is adorned with leaves. It is carried to the place of burial on the arms of relatives. Finally the body is wrapped in a mat of *olai* (palm-leaf) before being lowered into the grave. While proceeding to the burial place, some adult males collect stones and throw them into the valleys, uttering a few syllables. They believe this will chase away evil spirits that might be following the dead body. The Maha Malasar perform *karumathi* (last rites), to terminate death pollution, on the seventh day. Ancestral worship is practised and offerings are made annually.

The Maha Malasar were traditional food-gatherers and depended entirely on the forests. They gathered minor forest produce, such as soapnut, honey, ginger and turmeric and gave them to the traders in exchange for foodgrain and clothes. This process of exchange continued till Government declared the forest a wild life sanctuary. Since then, various measures have been taken to help the tribals to achieve economic independence through different schemes. Under the cooperative movement the sanctuary started a Cooperative Society at Topslip, to provide full-time profitable employment for the tribals.

Each Maha Malasar settlement has a *mooppan*, male leader, and a *ponnu thalaivi*, female leader. Together, they settle the various disputes which are brought to their notice. Though they have their own traditional tribal council, the *mooppan* generally maintains cohesion and solidarity among the members. If any person violates their traditional norms and does not obey the *mooppan* and *ponnu thalaivi*, then he and his family are socially boycotted. For good and able deeds, the *mooppan* announces rewards, such as giving status to the person in the tribal council.

The Maha Malasar profess a tribal religion. They worship forest gods and goddesses, trees, mountain peaks and rivers, symbolising them as *vanadevathai*. They mainly worship Vanabadra Kaliamman, Banathiamman (Banaru is a river of the locality), Perungunruamman, Ponnalamman and Nagaroothuamman. Perungunru is a dominant peak and Nagaroothu is a rivulet in the area. They offer rice cooked with jaggery to the goddess Banathiamman during the month of *Thai* (January). Nowadays, a few Maha Malasar have started worshipping Lords Muruga and Siva and go on pilgrimages to sacred centres such as Palani and Tiruvannamalai. They have their own family deities, as well as settlement deities. They have their own sacred specialists who perform their birth and death rites.

The Maha Malasar make excellent reed mats and baskets, using no implement other than their billhooks. They make these mats and baskets for their own use. Their oral traditions (folk-songs, folklore) are adopted from the Kadar of the same area. They have their own percussion musical instruments, such as the *pottu, peepi* and *urumai.*

Being pure vegetarians the Maha Malasar consider themselves superior to the other tribal nonvegetarian communities. They do not accept food from the Malasar, Muduvan and Kadar but share water sources with them. They share burial grounds with other tribal communities. They do not have symbiotic or other relationships with other tribal groups.

In the Wild Life Sanctuary, Pollachi range, only five Maha Malasar boys and three girls study in the schools located at Topslip and Anaimalai. Most boys and girls drop out from studies because they have to collect forest produce to help support their families. Though the Maha Malasar favour modern medicare, they do not have hospitals near their settlement. Hence they mostly depend on indigenous medicines. They have a drinking water facility in their vicinity. The Sanctuary has provided ration distribution through a Fair Price Shop, but this is located far from the settlement.

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MAHENDRA

The Mahendra are traditional basket makers who also make a variety of bamboo articles such as sieves, baskets, cradles, mats, fans, boxes, cages, broomsticks and so on. Medara, Medarulu, Vedakkara, Murakkora, Medakkara, Gavara, Vaduga, Kavari, Baliga, Naicker and Burud are their other appellations. They are known as Mahendra, Medar and Medarulu in Andhra Pradesh. Most of them use Naidu and Chettiar as titles, while a few in southern districts use Naicker as a title. According to the 1901 Census, their population was 20,662. They are distributed in all the districts of Tamil Nadu, but their concentration is more in Coimbatore, Periyar, Salem, Madurai, Dharmapuri, Tiruchchirappalli and South Arcot Districts.

The name Mahendra was obtained by the community because of their descent from the Mahendrachala mountain or Mahendra Parvata (the abode of Lord Indra). Regarding their origin, Thurston (1909) writes: "Dakshudu, the father-in-law of Siva, went to invite his son-in-law to a devotional sacrifice, which he was about to perform. Siva was in a state of meditation, and did not visibly return the obeisance which Dakshudu made by raising his hands to his forehead. Dakshudu became angry, and told his people not to receive Siva or his wife, or show them any mark of respect. Parvati, Siva's wife, went with her son Ganapati, against her husband's order, to the sacrifice and received no sign of recognition. Then she shed tears, and the earth opened, and she disappeared. She was again born of Himavant (Himalaya), and Siva, telling her who she was, remarried her. Siva in reply to her enquiries, told her that she could avoid a further separation from him if she performed a religious vow, and gave cakes to Brahmans in a *chata*, or winnowing basket. She accordingly made a basket of gold, which was not efficient, because, as Siva explained to her, it was not plaited, as bamboo baskets are. Taking his serpent, Siva turned it into a bamboo. He ordered Ganapati, and others, to become men, and gave them his *trisula* and *ghada* to work with on bamboo, from which they plaited a basket for the completion of Parvati's vow. Ganapati and the Banesha remained on the Mahendrachala mountain, and married

Gandarva women, who bore children to them. Eventually, they were ordered by Siva to return, and as they could not take their wives and families with them, they told them to earn their livelihood by plaiting bamboo articles. Hence, they were called Mahendrulu or Medarlu." However, the oral tradition that prevails among the people narrates the story that their ancestor was created by Lord Siva to cut the bamboo trees touching the sky and obstructing him on his way to bless a *muni* (saint) in deep penance. He instructed them to make use of the bamboo (*meda*) to earn their livehood.

The Mahendra are a migrant population from the Telugu country. They speak Telugu among themselves and in Tamil with others. They use the Tamil script.

The Mahendra are nonvegetarian, but do not eat beef or pork. Their staple food is rice, millets and *ragi* preparations. They also eat pulses, vegetables, roots and fruits. They use groundnut oil for cooking. They consume tea, coffee and milk products. Some men smoke *beedis* and cigarettes and use snuff. They take alcoholic drinks occasionally.

The Mahendra are an endogamous group, divided into nine *gotras* of which Nagasila, Brahmbala, Vishnupala, Rudrapala and Gangana are the known *gotras* in Tamil Nadu. Each *gotra* is split into 12 *kulams* (lineages). Some of the *kulams* are further divided into sub-*kulams*. The *kulam* under one *gotra* as well as sub-*kulams* under one *kulam* are *pangalis* (brothers). Both *kulams* and *gotras* are exagomous groups. They regulate marriage alliances and indicate descent. In the past, there were Vaishnava and Saiva *gotras* as well as Vaishnava and Saiva *kulams* and endogamy existed at these level. Nowadays, such divisions are not prevalent. They used to have *kulam* names as surnames. Of late, they have started using place names, *viz.* Mettupalayam, Salem and Vellore as surnames. Most of them now use the father's or grandfather's name as a surname, a common practice of the Tamils. They are aware of the Hindu *varna* system and consider themselves Sudras.

The Mahendra follow community-level endogamy and *kulam*-level exogamy. There are different sets of *kulams*, *e.g.* Tamminayanavallu, Burevallu, Vasamvallu, Yekaamvallu, Bommidivallu, Bandalavallu and Puttapatri belong to one set and are called *pangalis* (brothers). Similarly, Metukuvallu,

Kanchamvallu, Kangaevallu, Patakotavallu, Kanneeramvallu, Potalvallu, Seelaevallu, Damaevallu, Samaevallu, Kolaevallu and Sambaevallu belong to another set of *pangalis*. One set of *pangalis* call the other set of *pangalis* as *sambandhis*. Monogamy is the norm. Polygyny is allowed. They prefer and practise consanguineity.

Marrying father's sister's daughter, mother's brother's daughter or sister's daughter (uncle-niece) are the common types of marriages among the Mahendra. Boys get married between 21 and 25 years and girls between 16 and 20. Marriage by negotiation is the mode of acquiring a mate. Sororate (junior) is allowed. Vermilion, the *thali* and toe-rings are the marriage symbols. A token bride-price is paid in cash. Nowadays, dowry, both in cash and kind has replaced bride-price. It is a patrilocal and patrilineal society. Divorce and widow remarriage are not allowed.

Both nuclear and vertically extended families are observed among the Mahendra. There is no avoidance relationship. A joking relationship exists between a man and his elder brother's wife, sisters-in-law and brothers-in-law, grandparents and grandchildren. They follow the male equigeniture rule of inheritance and succession is by the eldest son.

Mahendra women have a role in agricultural operations and animal husbandry. They participate in basket-making but they are not allowed to go to the forest to fetch bamboo. They have no right to control family expenditure. The educated women among them work in both private and government organisations. Women participate in social functions and religious activities.

The Mahendra observe pre-delivery rituals. *Seemantham* or *valaikappu* is performed during the seventh or ninth month of the first pregnancy by the expectant mother's parents at her husband's house. She is then taken to her natal home for delivery. An Ambattan midwife conducts the delivery at home and the Vannan washes the polluted clothes. Birth entails pollution for 11 days. On the 11th day, a ceremonial bath is given to both the mother and the child. In the past, the child was placed in a *cheta* (winnowing fan) soon after delivery, a tradition now not in practice. They conduct the naming ceremony on the 11th evening at their *kuladeivam's* temple. They perform the tonsuring ceremony for both sexes and ear-

boring for girls at the age of three. The maternal uncle initiates the tonsuring and the Ambattan completes it. During ear-boring, the maternal uncle keeps the child on his lap.

When a Mahendra girl attains puberty, she is placed in seclusion for a period of ten days. A ceremonial bath is given to end the pollution. During the pollution period, she is fed with highly nutritious food, such as eggs, milk, gingelly oil and jaggery. She is also given a special food, *pulagam* (a kind of rice dish with a mixture of green gram, fried in gingelly oil), but no nonvegetarian food. On the 16th evening, they perform *seerseyadam* (puberty ceremony), to which a few relatives are invited. The maternal uncle gives the girl a sari and toilet items. A Brahman priest conducts *punyavachanam.*

The Mahendra perform weddings in the Brahmanical tradition. Customarily, the marriage rituals take place at the bride's residence while the consummation ceremony takes place at the bridegrooms's residence.

The Mahendra bury their dead and observe 11 days of pollution. On the third day, they observe *pal poyadam* (milk pouring rituals) at the grave. On the 11th day, the *karumathi* (last rites) are performed. On the 13th day, they observe *punyadami* (giving gifts to Brahmans). They worship ancestors once a year on Adi Amavasai day. The eldest son performs the funeral rites for the father and the youngest for the mother.

The traditional and primary occupation of the Mahendra is basket-making. They make a variety of articles with bamboo. A few of them have started settled cultivation. In recent times, some families have learned to make artificial diamonds and taken it up as a primary occupation. The educated work in both private and government organisations. Some of them have become industrial workers and non-skilled labourers while a few have started a variety of petty trades and businesses. They have direct links with the market or through middlemen and cooperative societies. They deal in cash.

The traditional caste council exercises social control over the Mahendra. The *oorthalaivar* is the head and the *panchayattar* are the members. They are elected by voice vote. They have community associations at the district and State level to look after their welfare programmes. The traditional caste council

settles a variety of disputes and imposes punishment in the form of fines and social boycott.

The Mahendra were divided into Saivites and Vaishnavites in the past, but such differences do not exist now. They have family as well as *kulam* deities, *e.g.* Yellamma of Dadikombu, Angalamman and Veeramattiamman of Tottiyam, Ellamma of Kalappanayakampatti, Satyamangalam and Pattiveerampatti and Perumal of Satyamangalam, Sendamangalam and Kalampatti. They have village deities such as Angalamma, Ellamma, Venammattiamman, Ael and Soniamma. Their regional deity is Murugan. The *pangalis* of a *kulam* jointly organise the *kovil tiruvizha* for their *kuladeivam* once a year in the Tamil months of *Purattasi* or *Adi*. They also conduct village deity fairs in *Masi* or in *Purattasi*. They celebrate Vinayaka Chaturthi, Sivaratri, Deepavali, Pongal, New Year's Day, Sriramanavami and Durgashtami.

The Mahendra are experts in basketry. They have an oral tradition relating to their origin and migration. They have folk-tales on the heroes of their community.

The Mahendra exchange water and food with other communities which are of equal status. They share wells with other communities. They maintain symbiotic relationships. The community has businessmen, teachers, engineers, doctors, defence personnel and politicians at village panchayat level.

The Mahendra favour formal education for their children. Many of them study upto college level. They drop out from studies at the primary and secondary school levels due to poverty. Girls drop out from studies due to social reasons. They favour modern and indigenous medicare. They favour family planning. They have access to civic amenities. Some of them have benefited by self employment programmes for basketry and small-scale industry.

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MALA

The Mala are also called as the Arava Mala, Parayan and Harijan. The community is identified at the local level.

Regarding the origins of the Mala, Stuart (1891), quoted by Thurston (1909), writes, "The Mala are the Pariahs of the Telugu country". Dr. Oppert derives the word from a Dravidian root meaning 'a mountain' and which is represented by the Tamil *malai* and Telugu *malai*. In C.P. Brown's Telugu Dictionary, the word *mala* is derived from *maila*, meaning 'dirty'. Elaborating on this point, the Rev. S. Nicholson (in Thurston, 1909) writes, "Originally the Malas belonged to the *kudi paita* section of the community, *i.e.* their women wore the cloth over the right shoulder, but now there are both the right and left *paita* sections, and this must be taken as the principal division. The right hand (right *paita*) section is again divided into (a) Reddi Bhumalavaru, (b) Pokunativaru. The left hand (left *paita*) section are Murikinativaru."

The following legend professes to account for the existence of the three divisions of the Mala. When Virabahuvu went to the rescue of Harischandra, he promised Kali that, if she granted him success, he would sacrifice to her his wives, of whom he had three. Accordingly, after his conquest of Vishvamithrudu, he returned and called his wives that he might take them to the temple in order to fulfil his vow. The wives got some inkling of what was in store for them, and one of them took refuge in the house of a Reddi Bhumala, another ran away to the eastern country (Pokunati), while the third, though recently confined and still in her dirty (*muriki*) cloth, determined to abide by the wish of her lord. She was, therefore, sacrificed to Kali, but the Goddess, seeing her devotion, restored her to life and promised to remain forever her helper. The reason given for the change in the method of wearing the cloth is that, after the incident described above took place, the women of the Murikinati section, in order to express their disapproval of the two unfaithful wives, began to wear their clothes on the opposite *viz.* the left, shoulder. In marriages, however, whatever the *paita* of the bride, she must wear the

cloth over the right shoulder. The Reddi Bhumala and Pokunativaru say that the reason they wear the cloth over the right shoulder is that they are descendants of the Gods. According to a legend, the goddess Parvathi, whilst on a journey with her lord, Parameshvarudu, discarded one of her unclean (*maila*) cloths, from which was born a little boy. This boy was engaged as a cattle-herd in the house of Parameshvarudu. Parvathi received strict injunctions from her lord that she should on no account allow the little Mala to taste cream. One day, however, the boy discovered some cream, which had been scraped from the inside of the pot, sticking to a wall. He tasted it, and found it good. Indeed, so good was it that he came to the conclusion that the udder from which it came must be even better still. So, one day, in order to test his theory, he killed the cow. Then came Parameshvarudu in great anger, and asked him what he had done, and, to his credit be it said, the boy told the truth. Then Parameshvarudu cursed the lad and all his descendants, and said that from henceforth cattle should be the food of the Mala — the unclean.

The present day Mala or the Arava Mala are migrants from Andhra Pradesh. But, Their distribution is in the border districts of Tamil Nadu such as North Arcot Ambedkar, Chengai-MGR and Madras.

The Mala speak Telugu among themselves and Tamil with outsiders. The literates in the group use the Tamil script. They dress like everyone around them. Constitutionally they belong to the Scheduled Caste category. According to the 1981 Census, the total population of the Mala in Tamil Nadu was 16,115 of whom 97.8 per cent live in rural areas.

The Mala are regular nonvegetarian who eat pork and beef also. Their vegetable consumption is moderate. Their staple food is rice, supplemented by millets and *ragi*. They cook with groundnut oil. They consume all varieties of pulses, roots and tubers. The Mala men drink liquor regularly, their women drink, occasionally. They drink tea and coffee and consume milk products. The men smoke *beedis* and cigarettes. Both men and women chew betel leaves with arecanuts. They also use snuff. They eat fruit occasionally.

Among the Mala living in Tamil Nadu, only two subdivisions exist. They are the Pokunati and Murikinati, the former claiming a higher status. Many exogamous divisions prevail among the Mala of Andhra Pradesh but only a few are encountered in Tamil Nadu, such as:

Dara (stream of water), Gone (sack) and Pasala (cow) among the *Pokunati*. Gali (wind), Kommala (horn) and Pamula (snake) among the *Murikinati*.

The community's self-perception is low. The Mala recognise the four-fold *varna* status and consider themselves Sudras. Neighbouring communities at the regional level also perceive the Mala as having a low social status.

The Mala practise endogamy at the subdivision level *i.e.* members of the Pokunati and the Murikinati sections do not intermarry. They practice exogamy at the surname level. The surname is inherited through male descent and women adopt the surnames of their husbands after marriage. They prefer marrying their blood relatives. Marriages between uncle and niece and between maternal and paternal cross-cousins are the most frequent.

Girls of the Mala community are married after attaining menarche, at 13-16 years, but child marriages are not uncommon. Boys are married when they are 16-23. Marriages are usually negotiated by elders. Sometimes a boy runs away with a girl and returns to the village after some time to marry her legally. Monogamy is the norm, but polygamy is socially permitted in case the first wife is barren, or has no male issue. In such cases, the husband is permitted to marry his wife's younger sister.

As is common to all Hindus of this region *kumkum, thalibottu* and *mettelu* are the marriage symbols for the Mala women. Dowry is prevalent, and paid in kind. After marriage, the new couple usually live in the patrilocal residence. Either spouse can initiate divorce on grounds of adultery, barrenness, maladjustment, cruelty and insanity. Compensation as decided by the community *panchayat* is paid to the aggrieved party. In such cases, children are the responsibility of both parents. Remarriage is permitted for widows, widowers and divorcees of either sex.

In the past, joint families were common among the Mala, but nuclear families are on the rise now. The Mala do not maintain a joking or avoidance relationship with their kin-group. They practise the Hindu law of inheritance and, hence, all sons get equal shares in the ancestral property. The eldest son succeeds as the head of the family.

The Mala women participate in agricultural operations, other economic activities, social functions and rituals. They control family expenditure and possess decision-making powers. But, the women have a low status.

Seemantham is a pre-delivery ritual observed by the Mala. This is performed during the seventh or ninth month of a woman's first pregnancy by her parents. It is a simple function at which the woman is blessed by the elderly married women of the community who give her flowers, glass bangles and eatables. Childbirth takes place at her natal home or in a hospital. The mother has a purificatory bath on the third, fifth, seventh or ninth day after the delivery. On this day, the child is named. A naming ceremony is also observed when the child is three or five months old. An astrologer is consulted and a name is given to the child on that day after cradling.

The Mala children are tonsured at the age of three or five in a temple. Puberty rites are observed for the Mala girls. She is confined to a corner of the house where a temporary hut is erected for the purpose. On the ninth or eleventh day, she is given a purificatory bath terminating pollution and an animal is sacrificed to ward off evil spirits. She is accepted back into the house and the relatives are given a nonvegetarian feast. This is known as *thereti kalyanam.*

In the past, Mala marriages used to be celebrated elaborately over a longer duration. After consultation with a Brahman, the Mala would go in search of a bride. The marriage would be settled in two stages, *viz. chinna tamboolam* (little betel) which means the earliest arrangements for a future wedding, and *pedda tamboolam,* which takes place at the prospective bride's home. The chief rituals of a Mala wedding are: warding off the evil eye from the bridegroom, the erecting of the *pandal, nalugu* ceremonies, the wearing of *bhasingalu* or nuptial crowns, and the tying of the *thali.* Owing to the cost involved, almost

all these rituals are now curtailed. The marriage is negotiated and *muhurtham* is fixed on an auspicious day. Marriage rituals culminate with the bridegroom tying *thalibottu* around the bride's neck. This takes place either at the bridegroom's residence or at a public place such as a temple. Subsequently, a feast is given by the bridegroom's parents. The consummation ceremony takes place at the bride's home.

Among the Mala, there is a difference in the death ceremonies performed by the Vaishnavite and the Saivite sects. The former allow a person to die in the house, but the Saivites, fearing pollution, take the person outside the house as soon as it is realised that death is at hand. The Mala cremate only the eldest born and bury the rest, irrespective of whether they are Saivites or Vaishnavites. They observe pollution for 11-13 days and terminate it by performing *karyam* (last rites). On that day, a goat is sacrificed and relatives are given a nonvegetarian feast. They do not practise ancestral worship.

Nicholson (in Thurston, 1909) writes that according to their traditions, as told by their elders and religious mendicants, the Mala were in the past a tribe of free lances, who slept during the day and worked at night. They were evidently mercenaries hired by the Poligars (feudal chiefs) and carried out raids and committed robberies for the chieftain under whose protection they were. That this tradition has some foundation may be gathered from the fact that many of the house names of the Mala refer to weapons of war, like spear and drum. The services rendered by the Mala are temple services, *jatra* or festival service and village service consisting of sweeping, scavenging, carrying burdens and grave-digging, the last a right of theirs for ages.

The Mala are mainly a landless community and are dependent on land-holders for work. Hence, agricultural land owned by individual proprietors is the main resource for their livelihood. The majority of the men and women are engaged in agricultural labour, but some have now ventured into new avenues like industrial work, government and private service, self-employment and both skilled and unskilled labour. In recent times, landlessness has led to the rise in the number of daily wage casual labourers in the community. Bonded

labour used to exist, but not now. In the modern context, the Mala are employed as clerks, administrators, doctors, engineers, teachers and defence personnel. Political leadership has also emerged at the village panchayat level.

A traditional community *panchayat* (village council) exists for social control in the Mala community. As they are in a minority, they always live with other Scheduled Castes such as the Adi Dravidar and the Parayan. Therefore, the village panchayat plays a vital role in settling disputes among all communities. The panchayat is formed with three *nattamaikarar* (headmen) who are elected by voice vote. Its main function being social control, it imposes cash fines on offenders in cases of adultery, rape, elopement and theft. It also implements welfare and developmental activities.

Most of the Mala are Hindus and worship a number of deities. Traditionally, they are devout worshippers of Sunkulamma or Gangamma.

The Mala do not require the services of sacred specialists from other communities to perform any ritual. They celebrate all major Hindu festivals, such as Ugadi, Sankranti, Adi Krithigai and Deepavali. A number of them have accepted Christianity, but pre-conversion practices, like pre-delivery, childhood and pubertal rituals, still survive among them.

The Mala make crude drums, called *palakalu* and *dolu*, which they play expertly. Their oral tradition of folk-tales and folk-songs exists. Women sing folk-songs while doing agricultural work.

The Mala will not eat food prepared or touched by the Kamsala, the Medara, the Madiga, the Beri Chetti, the Boya or the Bhatrazu. There is no love lost between the Mala and the Madiga, and the latter never allow the former to travel in palanquins or ride on horseback during a festival. As they are considered a polluting caste, people from higher castes do not interdine with them. They participate in traditional temple festivities and rituals such as death processions. On such occasions, they have the specific duty of playing the drums.

The literacy rate is low among the Mala. Boys and girls drop out from school due to various social and economic pressures.

They make use of both traditional and modern medicare. Their attitude towards family welfare programmes is positive. They have benefited by the various developmental programmes. They have access to civic amenities.

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MALAKKURAVAN

The Malakkuravan, who also refer to themselves as the Malaikkuravar, are found in Kanniyakumari District. Neighbouring populations identify them as a local tribal community. The local people also address them as the Malakkuravar or the Marudamparai Colony Makkal for easy identification. The community elders believe that they migrated from the north Travancore region during the Pandya rule. The community perceives its distribution in adjacent Kerala State also. The constitutional status of the Malakkuravan is Scheduled Tribe. According to the 1981 Census, the total population of the Malakkuravan in Tamil Nadu was 7079.

The Malakkuravan speak Malayalam among themselves and Tamil with others. Their dialect is locally known as Kuravan Malayalam. A few of them know the Tamil script. Community identification markers are turban for men and ornaments and tattooing for women. The men wear shirt or banian and dhoti, generally called *pesha*. The old women wear one piece of white cloth round the waist (*towarthu mundu*) and a long white towel to cover the chest. Younger women wear coloured saris and blouses. Tattooing of their shoulders and hands is strictly followed by the women. The jewels worn by the women are made of either silver or brass.

The Malakkuravan are nonvegetarian, who eat beef, pork and frogs also. Their staple food is rice and they like to drink *pachavellai*, water removed after boiling the rice. They eat vegetables moderately and fruits occasionally. They consume all pulses, roots and tubers. They use groundnut oil for cooking. They drink coffee and tea. Both men and women habitually drink the locally available intoxicating drinks like *sarayam* and *kallu*. The men are fond of smoking *beedis* and the women like chewing tobacco and betel.

The Malakkuravan do not have social divisions, but economic and occupational hierarchy does exist. They are aware of the *varna* system and recognise their place in the system as below the Sudras.

The Malakkuravan are an endogamous group. They follow the *mama magal kattu* custom. They marry their cross-cousins

— their mother's brother's daughter or father's sister's daughter. The girls are married after attaining puberty, at the age of 14-18, and the boys at 18-20. Modes of acquiring mates include trial, mutual consent and negotiation. Monogamy is the norm, though the community allows sororal polygyny. Vermilion thread serves as the symbol of marriage for women. Giving dowry in cash is prevalent among them and the father of the bride pays 500 rupees, along with new clothes, to the bridegroom's father before the marriage.

Most Malakkuravar live in nuclear and joint families. An avoidance relationship is observed between mother-in-law and son-in-law and between daughter-in-law and father-in-law. A joking relationship is permitted with sisters-in-law and brothers-in-law. Equigeniture is the rule of inheritance among the Malakkuravan. But succession is by the eldest son. If any disturbances are reported within the community, then the local *muthukani* (headman), *vizhikani* (head of the tribal council) intervenes and restores peace.

The Malakkuravan follow the rule of patrilocal residence after marriage. Divorce (*bedam teerikedi*) is permitted with the consent of the *muthukani*. Either spouse can initiate divorce and the children become the responsibility of the father. A divorced woman can remarry, but the second husband does not tie a vermilion thread around her neck. Instead, he gives her a new sari before the *muthukani*.

Malakkuravan women have a secondary status compared to their men. They have a role in agricultural operations, animal husbandry, fishing, collecting firewood and in bringing drinking water. Though the women contribute to the family income, they do not control family expenditure.

The Malakkuravan observe simple rituals during pregnancy. The pregnant woman is taken to her mother's home for the first delivery during the eighth month. The delivery takes place in a solitary hut and is conducted by an experienced Kanikkaran woman. They observe birth pollution for seven days. The mother and child are accepted into the house on the seventh day after being given a ceremonial bath. On the 28th day, the maternal uncle of the child arrives to perform the simple ceremony of tying the waist thread called *araignan*. The

ceremony is known as *irupathiettu karuppu noolu kattu.* When the child is five months old it is taken to the Mandaikadu temple where the tonsure and naming ceremonies are performed. Girl children have their earlobes pierced when they are three.

Pubertal rites, *prayama vadu*, are performed when a Malakkuravan girl attains menarche. The girl is kept in seclusion in a specially erected hut for seven days. During this period, she is given a diet consisting of rice flour, jaggery, eggs and fish. On the seventh day, they give her a special bath. Her maternal uncle gives her clothes, sweets and fruits on the occasion.

Marriages are settled by the Malakkuravan elders, though the initiative is taken by the maternal uncle of the bridegroom. An auspicious day is fixed for a formal betrothal ceremony. On that day, both parties assemble at the bride's house. The bridegroom's party gives betel and arecanut to all those assembled. Then they fix the date for the marriage and the dowry amount. Marriage rituals are performed at the bride's residence. On the day of the marriage, in front of the Kanikkaran priest (*pilathi*), the bridegroom ties the *thali* around the neck of the bride. This is followed by the singing of folk-songs. A blessing ritual follows. A small plank is laid before the married couple and, on either side of them, decorated pots containing water and betel leaves are placed. The elders who want to bless the couple come one by one and stand on the plank. The couple bend and touch the feet of the elder who, in turn, blesses the couple and gives them gifts. After this ceremony, the invited relatives are given a vegetarian feast. The marriage expenses are shared by both families. The Malakkuravan arrange the consummation ceremony on the third day after the marriage at the bride's natal home.

The entire Malakkuravan community turns up on hearing the news of a death. New cloth is bought to put on the corpse after it is bathed in hot water. This is followed by *vaikkarisi poduthal,* in which wet raw rice is put in the mouth of the corpse. The corpse is then placed on a cot or bier and carried to the place of burial in procession, led by men blowing conch shells and beating drums. They bury the dead in a prone

posture, placing the head towards south. On the 16th day, they perform *adiyendaram* (last rites). On that day, the *pilathi* performs death rites by offering nonvegetarian food. The invited relatives are then given a nonvegetarian feast. They worship their ancestors annually and offerings are made to them.

The major economic resource for the Malakkuravan is land. They are a landless community. Their traditional occupation was animal husbandry. But now their primary occupation is agricultural and plantation labour. Some are employed as permanent labourers and tappers in government as well as private rubber plantations. Most of their children are employed as daily wage labourers to support their families.

The Malakkuravan have accepted the Kanikkarans' tribal council as their controlling institution. They obey the orders and decisions of the council elders, led by the *muthukani* and *vizhikani*. The reasons for not having their own traditional tribal council is their nomadic habits, their small numbers and their employment in distant plantations. This situation has also led them to approach statutory panchayat officials to settle their social and economic problems.

The Malakkuravan followed the tribal religion, but nowadays they profess Hinduism and worship Siva. They believe in evil spirits and the spirits of plants, animals, rivers and ancestors. They believe that if they cannot keep the ghosts and evil spirits in good humour by offering them cocks and alcoholic drinks, they will be cursed by them. To avoid these demons, the Malakkuravan worship the forest gods, usually called the *vanadevangal*. The names of a few *vanadevangal* are Sasthavu, Mantramurthy, Ayarvelli and Pottanatha. They also observe a few Hindu festivals, such as Onam, Deepavali, Sivaratri, Pongal and Nagapanchami. Their sacred specialists are from the Kanikkaran community.

The folk-songs and folk-tales of the Malakkuravan are mainly taken from the religious texts of the Nayar, Nadar and Chettiar of the neighbourhood.

The Malakkuravan consider the Kanikkaran as their superiors among the tribal communities of the area, but tribal communities such as the Malai Vedan and the Kaniyan as inferior. But they accept both cooked and uncooked food from

all these communities. They also participate in all the religious ceremonies and festive occasions of other communities. They also maintain cultivator-labour relationship. Their contact with the administrative officials has inspired them to become active political workers and political leadership has started to emerge.

The Malakkuravan adult males are aware of the developmental schemes of the government and they have realised the value of formal education. Though they have a positive attitude towards modern medicine, their belief in the tribal religion makes them to use indigenous medicines. They are aware of the family planning programmes and their women get sterilised after three children. They have access to civic amenities.

JAKKA PARTHSARATHY

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MALAI PALIYAR

The Malai Paliyar have synonyms such as Paliyar, Palliyar, Malaival Makkal, Pulliar, Pallayan, Pulleer, Poleiyan. They are mainly distributed in the Madurai, Kamarajar, Tiruchchirappalli, Tirunelveli Kattaboman, Coimbatore and Anna Districts. The Paliyar inhabiting the Travancore region give an account of their origins. According to this, during a famine at some very remote period, an Eluvan sought refuge in the hills and took a Paliyar woman as his wife. Their descendants came to be called Paliyar (G.F.D'Penha, 1902 in Thurston, 1909).

The Malai Paliyar are nonvegetarian, who relish the meat of the wild buffalo and wild boar. Their food items include roots, tubers, leaves, honey, and wild fruits. They are experts in hunting animals and birds. Thurston (1909), while describing their food habits, gives interesting information. The Paliyar cook roots by putting them in a pit in the ground, heaping wood on them and lighting the wood. The fire is usually kept burning all night as a protection against wild beasts, and is often the only sign of the presence of the Paliyar in a jungle, for they are shy people, who avoid outsiders. Their hunting methods and food habits have not changed much even today, but there are some changes due to contact with plains people. Nowadays, rice and *ragi* are their staple food. They consume all varieties of pulses, vegtables, roots and wild fruits. They use groundnut oil for cooking. Both men and women drink *kallu* (toddy) and *sarayam* (arrack). They smoke *beedis* and chew betel and tobacco.

The Malai Paliyar are a homogeneous community without social divisions. Nuclear families are predominant. They do not observe any avoidance relationships. Joking relationships exist between brothers-in-law and sisters-in-law, and with grandparents. All children get equal shares from their parental property. The eldest son succeeds his father as the head of the family.

Malai Paliyar women work as agricultural labourers. They look after the cattle too. A few women fish in the nearby tanks. Women go out with the men to collect minor forest produce like honey, firewood, wild fruits, roots and tubers. Women

participate in all kinds of economic activities besides attending to household duties. They participate in social functions, and religious activities.

The Malai Paliyar adhere to community endogamy. They favour consanguineous marriages. Marriages between cross-cousins as well as between maternal uncle and niece are permitted. Child marriages were practised in the past. Now boys get married between 16 and 18, while girls get married immediately after menarche. Marital alliances are arranged after negotiations. Monogamy is the community norm. *Manjal kayaru* (*thali*), and *metti* (toe-rings) are the marriage symbols for women. Neither bride-price nor dowry is given. The married woman becomes a permanent member of her husband's family. Either spouse can get a divorce, with social approval, on grounds of adultery, maladjustment and cruelty. Children of divorced parents live with their father or mother, as suggested by the *kula panchayat*. Remarriages are allowed for both the widowed and divorced of either sex. Sororate and levirate are also permitted.

The Malai Paliyar do not observe any pre-delivery rituals and restrictions. Deliveries are conducted at home. Birth pollution is observed for 11 days. A ceremonial bath is given to both the mother and the child on the 11th day. The naming ceremony is conducted at a temple after one year. At times, naming is accompanied by the tonsuring ceremony. Some make and offer *pongal* (cooked rice) to the deities during rituals. When a girl attains puberty a small hut is constructed for the girl's stay during the 11 days' pollution. On the 11th day, a ceremonial bath is given to the girl. But no special ceremony is held. Their weddings are conducted without any special ceremonies. Generally, the marriage rituals, including the consummation ceremony, are observed at the bridegroom's residence. Moreover, the expenses of the marriage feast, including the liquor, are borne by the bridegroom's family. The dead are buried. Death pollution is observed for 11 days. *Karumathi* (death ceremony) is conducted on the 11th day. Ancestor worship is observed on Adi Amavasya day.

Forest and land are the main natural resources of the Malai Paliyar. They are mainly a landless community. Hunting and

gathering are their traditional occupations. They are good trackers and hunt a variety of animals in the nearby forest. Some of them still use the bow and arrow for hunting. They make a variety of snares to trap animals. Some of them fish in the nearby tanks. Nowadays, most of them are dependent on minor forest produce for a living. Some of them are unskilled agricultural labourers. Recently, a few of them have started settled cultivation and animal husbandry due to the developmental programmes implemented by the Government. Some have started trading in forest produce and dairy products. They have direct links with the market. They receive wages in both cash and kind. Most of their children are engaged in their traditional profession or sent to work as agricultural labour instead of going to school.

The Malai Paliyar have a traditional *kula panchayat* (caste council) for social control. The *thalaivar's* (head of the panchayat) decision is final on issues concerning the tribe and in dispute settlement. The *thalaivar's* was a hereditary office in the past. He is now elected by voice vote and his role and authority are gradually decreasing. The caste councils settle disputes and cases of adultery, rape, elopment, disrespect for traditional norms, theft and divorce.

The Malai Paliyar are Hindus, who worship deities of the wider pantheon. They follow tribal religion. Their tribal deity is Pooma Devi. There is no special idol or temple for this deity. Instead, it is worshipped as a medium-sized quartz stone placed under a tree on a Wednesday in the month of *Karthigai*. A big *mulavalli kizhangu* (a kind of tuber) is offered to the deity. A fowl may be sacrificed to the deity. Traditional musical instruments are played during this event, and both men and women drink toddy. Powers of witchcraft and magic are attributed to the Malai Paliyar by other communities. Some of them visit the temple of Madurai Meenakshi, Azhagar Kovil, Andal of Srivilliputtur, Tirukazhukundram and Palani. They participate in the fairs and festivals of the local temples.

The Malai Paliyar have an oral tradition. Both men and women sing folk-sŏngs during fairs and festivities. They play music on the *dappu* (tom-tom), and *pullankuzhal* (flute) at the

time of fairs and rituals. Both men and women dance high-spiritedly on such occasions.

Traditionally, the Malai Paliyar accept water and food from the higher castes but not from the Scheduled Castes and the service castes. No other community accepts water and food from the Malai Paliyar. They share wells and other water sources with others. They have a separate burial ground near their settlement. They work as agricultural labourers under landlords of other communities.

Most Malai Paliyar do not send their children to school. Those who do go to school drop out due to economic reasons. They use both folk medicine and modern medicare. They have their own remedies for many ailments, such as snake bites. They do not favour family planning.

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MALAI VEDAN

The Malai Vedan call themselves Malai Vedar, while others refer to them as Malai Kani, Karungali Makkal and Malai Velan. They do not have titles. They do not use any surnames. The constitutional status of the Malai Vedan is Scheduled Tribe.

The Malai Vedan believe that they migrated to their present habitat from the Idukki District of Kerala State during the time of Marthanda Varma, a ruler of Travancore. But no ethnographic or historical account exists to support their claim of migration.

In Kanniyakumari District, the Malai Vedan are found in the Mothiramalai region of Kalkulam taluk. The total population of this community, according to the 1981 Census was 7098 persons. The Malai Vedan live on the mountainous wastes of Kalkulam and Vilavancode taluks of Kanniyakumari District, which lie on either side of the Western Ghats.

The Malai Vedan speak Malayalam among themselves and Tamil with others. Their Malayalam is locally known as *vedan bashai*, because even the local people who know Malayalam cannot follow the dialect of the Malai Vedan. A few Malai Vedan know the Tamil script.

The Malai Vedan are seen to be generally fair complexioned, but some are dark though much lighter complexioned than the Kanikkaran and Kaniyan. They look tall and slender and have aquiline noses and pointed chins. A few males are snub-nosed.

The Malai Vedan men wear dhotis tucked up as *langotis* (loincloths) and wear towels tied as turbans. Some men wear shirts or banians. The older women wear a small piece of cloth around their waist and cover their breasts with a white towel. The younger women wear coloured saris and blouses. The women wear lots of ornaments made of cheap white metal for the nose, ears, neck, ankles and even the feet. The women tattoo their bodies.

The Malai Vedan are nonvegetarian, who eat pork, beef and rats also, but do not eat buffalo meat. Their staple food is rice

and *ragi.* They eat pulses, roots and tubers and, occasionally, fruits. They use groundnut and coconut oils for cooking. They drink coffee and tea. The Malai Vedan habitually consume alcoholic drinks, such as *sarayam, kallu* and other cheap fermented liquors. Their women consume liquor on festive occasions. Both men and women chew betel leaves with arecanuts and tobacco. The Malai Vedan consider the Malai Vedan who live in the Idukki District of Kerala as their superiors on the basis of original territorial level.

The Malai Vedan are an endogamous group. Consanguinity governs their matrimonial alliances. They prefer to marry an elder sister's daughter, daughter of a maternal uncle or of a paternal aunt.

Child marriage was the earlier practice among the Malai Vedan. Nowadays, girls are married after attaining puberty. The age of marriage is 15-18 years for girls, and 20-25 for boys. Marital alliances are negotiated by the maternal uncle. Modes of acquiring mates among the Malai Vedan are marriage by capture, elopement and courtship. Monogamy is the present norm in the community but sororal polygyny, nonsororal polygyny and junior sororate are permitted in case the first wife is infertile. A few registered marriages have occurred among them. Vermilion, the *thali* and toe-rings are the marriage symbols. Giving dowry is prevalent among them. It is said that in the past, the Malai Vedan received silver rupees as dowry. Divorce is permitted, with the consent of the *pilathi,* the head Malai Vedan on grounds of barrenness or impotence. Divorce compensation is given to the aggrieved party. Either spouse can initiate divorce. Divorced women can remarry any person within their community under the *rendam kannalam* custom. Widows are allowed to remarry and during the simple ritual that is followed, the second husband gives the woman a new sari.

Most Malai Vedans live in nuclear families. They are patrilocal and patrilineal. Extended families are few. Joking and avoidance relationships exist. The Malai Vedan once followed the *marumakkathayam* rule of inheritance, but nowadays they follow the rule of equigeniture. The rule of succession is by the eldest son or even by an adopted son. If any disturbances

are reported within the community, then the local *muthukani*, head of the Kanikkaran, intervenes and restores peace.

The status of the Malai Vedan women is very high. They participate in all social and religious activities along with their men. Most women work as daily wage labourers in rubber plantations and in the forest to support their families. The Malai Vedan women are greatly respected for their courage and straightforwardness. When a visitor approaches the Malai Vedan settlement or their house, it is the woman who faces the visitor while the men stay inside the houses. The women even approach the government officials or other trading contractors boldly for work. These factors may be the reason why even the Kanikkaran men prefer to marry the Malai Vedan girls. Women participate in all activities except in political mechanism and social control. Women contribute much to the family and also control family expenditure. But their high status has, of late, been decreasing because of the changes in the rights over ancestral property.

The Malai Vedan do not observe any pre-delivery rituals or post-delivery restrictions. The pregnant woman is taken to her natal home for the first delivery, either during the seventh or ninth month. Helped by an experienced elder woman, most of them have their childbirth at home. They observe birth pollution for seven days. On the seventh day, both the mother and the child are given baths and are allowed into the kitchen to observe rice boiling in a pot on the hearth. The delivery place is then cleaned with cowdung and a lamp is lit there. Both, the mother and the child return from the kitchen and circumambulate the lamp three times. On the 28th day, they tonsure the child in the temple in the presence of the *muthukani* and relatives. On this occasion, the maternal uncle of the child ties a black thread around its waist. This ceremony is called *karuppunool aranjeneur*. Then the maternal uncle utters in the child's ear three times the name to be given it and then he says it aloud. The earlobes of girls are pierced in their fifth year.

Puberty rites are performed when a Malai Vedan girl attains menarche. The girl is kept in seclusion for seven days. On the seventh day, she is given a bath and receives clothes, sweets

and cosmetics from her maternal uncle. Married women then perform the *todukku talivudu*, after which she may enter the kitchen. A vegetarian feast is given to relatives.

Malai Vedan marriages used to be celebrated over three days, but this has now been reduced to a single day. The wedding takes place at the bride's residence. A *pandal* is erected in front of the house and a bamboo platform is constructed under the *pandal*. The *pilathi*, the priest of the Malai Vedan is invited to officiate. The bridegroom ties the *thali* around the bride's neck. After the *thali*-tying ceremony, a feast is given to the relatives. The consummation ceremony takes place at the bride's natal home.

When death occurs, every Malai Vedan assembles at the house of mourning. They adorn the dead with a *namam* and drape the body in new white clothes. The death rites are conducted by the Malai Vedan *pilathi* or, if he is not available, they approach the Kanikkaran *pilathi* to perform the last rites. They do not play music and do not allow weeping during the funeral procession. They bury the dead in a prone position, with the head towards the east. They perform *adiyendaram* on the 16th day after the burial. On that day, the *pilathi* performs death rites for the departed soul by offering it coconuts. A nonvegetarian feast is served to the relatives. They worship their ancestors in a ritual called *kumbavaram* and make offerings to them annually.

The major economic resource of the Malai Vedan community is the forest and the land. It is mainly a landless community. The traditional occupation of the Malai Vedan is gathering forest produce. But nowadays they have taken to varied occupations, such as plantation labour and employment. A few work as tappers in government rubber plantations. Most of them are labourers. A negligible number of them sell fruits and betel leaves in the local market. A few are employed in sericulture farms. There are no bonded labourers among them. Most of their children are employed as daily wage labour and support their families. They receive wages in both cash and kind.

The traditional tribal council of the Malai Vedan exists in Kerala State, but in Kanniyakumari District, the Malai Vedan accept the Kanikkaran tribal council and request the *muthukani*

and *vizhikani* (heads of the council) to help them to solve their disputes and divorce cases. Sometimes, when their community head, the *pilathi* comes from Idukki (Kerala), then they request him to resolve their problems. There are no specific punishments, but if any one disrespects the traditional norms, then he or she may be reprimanded by the *pilathi* or *muthukani* in public. They do not have regional or local associations to safeguard their interests.

The Malai Vedan are Hindus. They consider Karunkali as their community deity. They worship her every Friday and on Onam day with a variety of offerings. They also worship Mandramurthy, Kaduvamurthy, Pandradana Ayyappan, Bhadrakaliamman, Yeratemallam, Karungaliamman and Marranayin. They do not have family deities and their sacred specialist is the *pilathi* from their own community. But they also engage the sacred specialist of the Kanikkaran community to perform life cycle rituals.

The Malai Vedan celebrate Onam, Deepavali, Pongal, Bahubali, Karthigai and Vishu and also participate in the fairs and festivals of the Kanikkaran and Kaniyan. They go on pilgrimages to Kanniyakumari and Sabarimalai. A few Malai Vedan have converted to Christianity.

The oral traditions of the Malai Vedan are taken from the religious texts of the Nayar, Nadar and Namboodri communities. They use wind instruments and only the men are allowed to dance.

The Malai Vedan live along with other tribal communities such as the Kanikkaran, the Kaniyan and the Malakkuravan. They accept both cooked and uncooked food from the Kanikkaran but refuse them from the Kaniyan and the Malakkuravan. They consider the Kanikkaran their equals and feel superior to the Kaniyan and the Malakkuravan. They share burial grounds with other Hindus. They maintain landlord-labour relationships. They receive the services of the barber and washerman in urban areas.

Intertribal marriages have occurred among the Malai Vedan. A few Malai Vedan girls have married Kanikkaran boys. They do not pay much attention to education and the few who go to school soon drop out due to poverty and backwardness.

They largely rely on traditional medicines and use indigenous methods of family planning. They do not have drinking water facilities within their vicinity. Voluntary organisations in the area help them to get employment. A few have taken to fisheries. They do not use electricity.

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MALAI VELLALAR

The Malai Vellalar derive their name from two Tamil words, *malai* (hill) and *vellala* (tiller). They inhabit the slopes and valleys of the Eastern Ghats and the plains in the Periyar and Salem Districts. They are also called Vellalar, or by their titles, Koundan, Koundar and Goundar. It is said that they migrated to their present habitat from Kollimalai in the Salem District two to three centuries ago. They speak Tamil and use its script.

Although the Malai Vellalar are nonvegetarian, they abstain from eating beef. Their staple foods are rice and *ragi* and take the gruel of rice or *ragi* twice a day. Groundnut oil is used for cooking. They eat a variety of roots and tubers, and vegetables. The Malai Vellalar men are fond of toddy (*kallu*) and arrack (*sarayam*). Some of them are addicted to *ganja* (opium). Irrespective of age and sex, the Malai Vellalar chew tobacco and betel.

The Malai Vellalar are divided into two phratries which are named after their associated deities, *viz.* Arapulieswar and Ranganathar or Bhadrakali. Each phratry is divided into a number of exogamous clans (*kulam*). Within each phratry the clans share a fictive brotherhood, so that intermarriage is prohibited. There are around two dozen clans in the community, *viz.*, Sambalandi, Kannan, Sernak, Arattal, Kottiyandi, Kolave, Velliri, Yerumettal, Naikandi, Mokandi, Masantal and Senneki. Children always belong to the clan and phratry of their father.

The Malai Vellalar strictly adhere to community endogamy and clan exogamy. Consanguineous marriages are quite common among them. A man can marry his father's sister's daughter or mother's brother's daughter or sister's daughter. Girls get married at the age of 10-12 years, while boys marry between 15 and 20. However, the age at marriage is increasing for both sexes. Marriage by negotiation is the norm. Monogamy is the marital norm. The *thali* and toe-rings are the marriage symbols for women. A token bride-price (*parisam*) of Rs 200 to 500 is paid at the time of the marriage. They follow the patrilocal rule of residence. Divorce is allowed for either spouse

patrilocal rule of residence. Divorce is allowed for either spouse with the approval of the *kula panchayat* on ground of maladjustment. Divorce compensation is given to the aggrieved party. Children are the responsibility of the father in divorce cases. The divorced and widowed of either sex are allowed to remarry. A widower can marry his deceased wife's sister. Remarriage for a woman is not celebrated, but a *thali* is tied to solemnise the ritual. Bride-price is paid for a second marriage also.

Although the extended family is the norm among the Malai Vellalar, nuclear families are on the rise. A joking relationship is allowed between brothers-in-law as well as sisters-in-law and, between grandparents and grandchildren. They follow the male equigeniture rule of inheritance. The eldest son succeeds his father as head of the family.

Malai Vellalar women assist their men in agriculture operations, animal husbandry and other economic activities. Most women are agricultural labourers. They collect firewood and carry it on their heads in bundles for sale in the plains. Some women make bamboo baskets for a livelihood. They graze the cattle on mountain slopes, and collect roots and tubers, besides attending to household chores. They control the family expenditure. Women are consulted in decision-making.

The Malai Vellalar conduct a pre-delivery ritual (*kattisor*) during the seventh or ninth month of a woman's first pregnancy. After that she is taken to her natal home for parturition. Most deliveries are conducted at home with the help of an experienced midwife. On the third day after delivery, a ritual bath is given to both the mother and the child to mark the end of pollution. During the advanced stage of pregnancy a woman is not allowed to visit temples or participate in ceremonies and rituals. After delivery, too, the mother and child are not allowed to visit any temple for about six months.

The Malai Vellalar conduct naming, tonsuring, ear-boring and first-feeding-of-cereals ceremonies on the same day at their *kuladeivam's* (clan deity) temple when the child is six months old. A goat or fowl is sacrificed to appease the deity. The maternal uncle gives new clothes to the child.

When a Malai Vellalar girl attains puberty, her maternal uncle erects a separate hut for her stay during the pollution

period. A ritual bath is given to the girl on the third day to terminate pollution. This is called *rudhu mangala snanam* or *poopunitha neerattu vizha*. In the evening of the same day, the puberty ceremony is conducted. The maternal uncle of the girl gives her new clothes.

The Malai Vellalar marriage rituals are very simple. The community head conducts the marriage. The main rituals of the marriage are conducted at the bride's home. Both the bridegroom's and the bride's parties arrange marriage feasts at their respective places. The consummation ceremony takes place at the bridegroom's residence.

The Malai Vellalar cremate their dead and observe three days of pollution. But children who have died before they are five, are buried. Some of them collect the *asthi* (bones and ashes) and dispose of it in the nearby stream or a river. The death ceremony is conducted on the third or fifth day. The annual death ceremony is conducted every year and, they worship their ancestors.

The Malai Vellalar are mainly dependant on land and forest. They are mainly a land-owning community. In the past, they were hunters, gatherers and pastoralists. Settled and terrace cultivation is their traditional and primary occupation. They cultivate *ragi,* tapioca and a variety of vegetables. The Malai Vellalar still collect a variety of roots and tubers from the forest and graze their cattle on the mountain slopes. They collect minor forest produce, such as wild fruits, soapnuts, myrobolans dye barks and honey and sell them to the forest department. The Malai Vellalar society was formed for this. They make baskets and broomsticks and sell them in the local weekly markets. Some of them collect firewood from the forest and sell it in the plains. Most of them are either agricultural or forest labourers. Of late, some of them have taken up animal husbandry, sericulture, petty business, masonry and basket-making as subsidiary occupations. They have direct links with the local market and are dependent on the local weekly market (*sandai*).

The Malai Vellalar have a traditional caste council for social control. The council has hereditary offices such as that of the *oor gounder, pattakaran* and *kali gounder*. They officiate at

marriages and death rituals as well as settle all kinds of disputes. They sanction divorce and permit remarriage for the divorced and widowed. The council imposes cash fines ranging from Rs.1.25 to Rs.15, depending on the offence. At times, the guilty are punished by social boycott. Further, the council heads play a major part in the fairs and festivities. The Malai Vellalar have recently started a modern caste association, The Malai Vellalar Sangam at Kalkadambur.

The Malai Vellalar are Hindus. The tutelary of the Arapulieswar phratry people is Arapulieswar of Kollimalai, while the other phratry's tutelary deity is Ranganathar of Kalkadambur and Bhadrakali of Mettupalayam. The *pujari* (priest) at the Arapulieswar temple is from the Malai Vellalar community while at the Ranganathar temple, an Urali Gounder is the priest. They conduct annual fairs for their *kuladeivam* during May-June (*Vaigasi*) and January-February (*Thai*) and these fairs are attended by all the Malai Vellalar. Lord Mahadeswara of Mahadeswara Betta is their regional deity. All of them visit that temple on the eve of Ugadi. They worship Mariamma in the month of *Vaigasi*.

Some Malai Vellalar are experts in making baskets and broomsticks. Both men and women sing folk-songs during fairs and festivities. They perform folk-dances (*koottatam*) on festive days.

The Malai Vellalar traditionally accept water and food from all the communities except the Scheduled Castes. The service castes, such as the Vannan (washerman) and the Ambattan (barber) render their services to the Malai Vellalar during their rituals and are paid in both cash and kind for their services. The Urali Gounder and the Pandaram work as labourers in the fields of the Malai Vellalar. Some of them are tenants of the Chettiar, Mudaliar and Nadar landlords.

Malai Vellalar boys go to school, but not the girls. The Malai Vellalar favour both traditional and modern medicare as well as family planning. They have access to electricity, drinking water and other civic amenities. Some of them have been benefited from IRDP and self-employment programmes.

V.S. DEEP KUMAR

MALASAR

The Malasar have been referred to by earlier writers (Thurston, 1909, Buchanan, 1807) as Malayar and Malasir. The Government of India has identified them as Malasar and given them the status of Scheduled Tribe. The Malasar are identified as a small tribal community who live only in the Pollachi taluk of the Coimbatore District. The Malasar believe that they were the original inhabitants of Kongu Nadu, the present Coimbatore District.

The population of the Malasar community, as reported in the 1981 Census, was 4162. The Malasar live in the foothills of the Anaimalai hills amidst non-tribal cultivators. They speak Tamil among themselves and with others. They use the Tamil script. Some of them are conversant with Kannada and Malayalam.

The Malasar wear clothes akin to the neighbouring population except that a few adult males wear headgear. The men wear short dhotis and half-sleeve shirts or banians. The women wear coloured saris. Only young women wear blouses. The children are generally half naked. Most of the men crop their hair, while the women part their hair in the middle and knot it at the back. The women wear silver or base metal ornaments. Most of the women and a few men are tattooed.

Information on demography, health status and morbidity on the Malasar are available (Tandon and Parthasarathy, 1983). The sex ratio was reported to be 96 and 108 in the isolated and exposed sections respectively. The authors reported that most of the women (53 %) of both sections and men (57 %) of the isolated section are medium statured and a considerable number of them (40 %) are short-statured. But among the exposed section, both medium and short-statured men are equally frequent (49 %). It is noticed that only a very few individuals (2.8 %) can be classified as tall.

The Malasar are nonvegetarian, who eat almost any meat. Their staple foods are *ragi* and rice. The Malasar consume greens, pulses, roots and tubers. They use groundnut oil for cooking. They occasionally eat fruit. Men and women take alcoholic drinks such as *sarayam* and *kallu* regularly. The men

are fond of smoking *beedis* and the women of chewing tobacco and betel.

The Malasar do not have social divisions, but there is an economic and occupational hierarchy among them. The Malasar who cultivate their own lands are considered superior to those who work as labourers for the nontribal land owners.

The Malasar are an endogamous group and they do not have exogamous divisions. They prefer to marry cross-cousins, that is, father's sister's daughter or mother's brother's daughter. Monogamy, polygyny and junior sororate are forms of marriage permitted by the society. The modes of acquiring mates are by service, mutual consent and negotiation. Girls used to be married soon after attaining puberty. Nowadays, the age at marriage is 16-18 years for girls, and 20-25 for boys. The *thali* and toe-rings are the marriage symbols. Giving a token bride-price (*pariyam*) is a common custom. It is a patrilineal society and couples live in the neolocal residence after marriage. Divorce is permitted with the consent of the *kula panchayat*. Either spouse can initiate the divorce, on grounds of barrenness, impotence, adultery or insanity. Divorce compensation is given to the aggrieved party. In such cases, the children are the responsibility of the father. Divorced women and widows can remarry any person within their community under the custom of *rendantharam*.

The nuclear family is the most common type among the Malasar. A joking relationship is observed with sisters-in-law and brothers-in-law and between grandparents and grandchildren. An avoidance relationship is observed between daughter-in-law and father-in-law. Male equigeniture is the rule of inheritance and succession is by the eldest son. Succession by an adopted son is permitted, but if a couple do not have a male issue then the man's youngest brother's eldest son becomes the successor.

The women in the Malasar community have a lower status than their men. Most women work as forest labourers, agricultural workers and support their families. The women have a role in social and other economic functions but they do not have a role in religious activities and in the mechanism of social control.

The Malasar community observes pre-delivery rituals and post-delivery restrictions for pregnant women. The pregnant woman is taken to her natal home for the first delivery. An elderly woman attends on the delivery. They observe birth pollution for seven days. On the seventh day, the mother and child are brought into the main room in the house after a purificatory bath. The child is usually named when it is two. A common name, *pulla* for boys and *pottai* for girls, is given to the child until then. They consult the *sadayan* (priest of the Malasar) to decide on the name. They perform the ear-boring ceremony only for female children. It is held after the third year at Sethumadai village. The attainment of puberty (*sadangagarathu*) is celebrated. The girl is secluded in a separate hut (*tinnai*) erected by the maternal uncle with bamboo. Pollution is observed for seven days. On the seventh day, the girl is taken into the home after a bath and a ceremony is performed under the supervision of the maternal uncle. Elderly married women prepare *seer* (a container with cooked rice, a comb, a small arrow, a mirror and plantains) and give it to the girl. A vegetarian feast is given to the relatives.

Marital alliances are fixed by negotiations in the presence of the *mooppan,* head of the Malasar. In the past, marriages were celebrated over three days, but now the entire ceremony lasts a single day. After the *nallanarle* (betrothal) ceremony, the elders fix a Friday for the marriage. The wedding (*taramuhurtham*) takes place at the bride's residence. The bridegroom ties the *thali* (a thread smeared with vermilion) around the neck of the bride. A nonvegetarian feast is given by both families. The marriage procession takes place in the night and they cover all the streets of the settlement, accompanied by *kottu molukku* (music) and *kalyana attam* (marriage-dance). The consummation ceremony takes place on the next day at the bride's residence.

When death (*elavu*) occurs, relatives and friends assemble at the house of the deceased. All Malasar remain in the village and help the bereaved family to perform the rituals. They wrap the corpse with a new cloth dipped in turmeric water and apply oil to its head. They also adorn the corpse with sacred ash. They perform *karumathi*, the last rites, on the eighth day. They worship their ancestors and make offerings to them annually.

The major economic resources of the Malasar community are land and forest. It is mainly a landless community, but Government has recently given land to them for cultivation. Their primary occupation now is agricultural labour. The Malasar are experts in catching and taming wild elephants. For this reason, some of the mahouts and *kavadis* employed by the Forest Department are Malasar.

The Government of Tamil Nadu has started a co-operative society in the Malasar area to provide profitable employment to the tribals and also to purchase minor forest produce from them. They depend entirely on the weekly market conducted at Sethumadai village for their needs. Some of the Malasar have direct links with the market.

The *kula panchayat* exists at the village level among the Malasar. The elders of the village along with their head, *mooppan*, are the members of the *kula panchayat*. The *kula panchayat* usually meets in the Kaliamman temple premises in the belief that people would not dare to speak lies before the goddess. The *kula panchayat* members have certain roles to play in sociopolitical and religious matters. The hierarchy of *kula panchayat* offices is: *mooppan*, *ponna mooppan*, *thalaivar*, *vanderi* and *manaikaran*. The *mooppan* looks after law and order in the village. He is called upon to arbitrate disputes. He heads the *kula panchayat* and delivers the *chattam*, judgement. The *ponna mooppan* performs these duties in the absence of the *mooppan*. His additional duty is to accompany govenment officials and take them around the settlement. He participates in rituals, functions and maintains the accounts of the collective village festivals. The *thalaivar* acts as the liaison officer of the *kula panchayat*. His main responsibility is to mobilise the local labour force whenever needed. The *vanderi* acts as a messenger between the *kula panchayat* and the Malasar living in different villages. The *manaikaran* works as an assistant to all the officials of the *kula panachayat*. His main job is to patrol the settlement at nights.

The Malasar are Hindus. They mainly worship goddesses such as Kaliamman, Ponnalaatha, Manakadevaatha, Mahagaliatha, Mariatha and Achcharyammann. They have a separate priest (*sadayan*) who performs their death rites, cures ailments and exorcises evil spirits. Their oral tradition (folk-songs, folk-

tales) are taken from the religious texts of the neighbouring population, such as the Gounder and the Chettiar. They play a few musical instruments, such as the *mattalam* (drum), *urumai* and *kolal* (pipe).

The Malasar consider the Malai Malasar as superior to them and accept food and water from them. In the forest, even the sight of a Malai Malasar is considered auspicious by the Malasar. But the Malasar consider themselves superior to other tribals of the area, such as Kadar, Muduvar and Paliyar. They try to avoid accepting cooked food from these tribal communities though they participate in, and attend, all their religious and other occasions. They refrain from eating from the hands of the Scheduled Castes. They share wells, roads, schools and burial grounds with other communities. But they prefer to bury their own dead in the forest. They maintain cultivator-labour and landlord-tenant relationships. They receive the services of the barber and washerman in towns and big villages. A few of them have become teachers in primary schools. Some of them are employed as watchmen, forest guards and also in railway services. A few of them have become active members in political parties.

The Malasar educate their children. But most students drop out from studies because of poverty, and the need to earn and support their families. They use both indigenous and modern medicare. They favour family planning, but only a few Malasar men and women have accepted it.

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MALAYALI

The Malayali call themselves Vellalar Gounders, while others refer to them by such synonyms as Malayalis, Malaialis and Kanchipuram Gounders. The local people of different regions also address them as Shevaroy Malai Makkal, Kolli Malai Makkal and Javadi Malai Makkal. The Malayali suffix the title Gounder to their male names. The present distribution of the Malayali is in the hills of North Arcot Ambedkar, South Arcot, Salem, Tiruchchirappalli and Dharmapuri Districts.

Etymologically, the term Malayali is derived from the words *malai* and *al*, which means 'hill-people'. Their origin and migration to the hills are shrouded in mystery. According to the Malayali in the Kolli and Javadi hills, they originally belonged to the Vellalar caste of cultivators, and migrated from the sacred city of Kanchipuram to the hill areas when parts of southern India were under Muslim rule. According to a version given by H. Le Fanu (in Thurston, 1909), "The ancient Malayali deity Kairaman, finding himself uncomfortable at Kanchipuram, took up a new abode. Three of his followers named Periyannan, Naduvannan and Chinnannan started with their families to follow him from Kanchipuram and came to Salem, Trichy and other districts of the State where they took different routes."

According to Stephen Fuchs (1973), "The Malayali are supposed to have belonged originally to the Tamil Vellala caste who retreated to the hilly tracts when the Muslim rule became dominant in South India. Others claim that they are the descendants of unions of Vellala men with Vedan women. This would be more in keeping with their cultural level, which is partly primitive." Sherring (1909) says, "The Malayali tribe consist of cultivators, woodmen and shepherds, and are not so uncivilised as many other hill tribes." Thus, these legends and comments reveal that they were originally a caste group who became Malaialis (hillmen) after migration from Kanchipuram to the hills of different districts.

The population of the Malayali community in Tamil Nadu, according to the 1981 Census was 2,09,039 persons. They form 45.6 per cent of the total tribal population of Tamil Nadu.

The Malayali speak Tamil among themselves and with other communities. They use the Tamil script. Some of them are conversant with Telugu and Kannada. The older men tie their hair in a knot on one side, but younger men and boys have begun cropping their hair. The Malayali are constitutionally a Scheduled Tribe.

The sex ratio among the Malayali ranges from 79.25 to 122.72, the male literacy rate is 44.55 per cent and female literacy in 11.32 per cent, the fertility ratio ranges from 58.71 to 104.55, and the average percentage of the married, unmarried, widowed and divorced or separated are 43.21, 51.10, 2.87 and 2.82 respectively. (Parthasarathy, 1988).

The Malayali are nonvegetarian, who eat pork but not beef or buffalo meat. Their staple food is millets like *colam, kambu* and *samai.* Occasionally they consume rice and *ragi.* Their delicacy is *chendhu kazhi,* which they prepare on festive occasions by mixing *colam* and rice flour and boiling it with jaggery. They habitually take alcoholic drinks, such as *sarayam* and *kallu.* The women also drink liquor on festive occasions. The men are fond of smoking *beedis* and loose tobacco and use snuff, while the women chew betel.

The Malayali are divided into two endogamous groups on the basis of the tattoo marks on their bodies. These groups are the Karalar Gounder, who do not sport tattoo marks, and the Vellala Gounder who do. Though they have phratry type divisions among them, their identity and function are not clear. The Malayali of the Kolli hills, Kalvarayan hills and Pachamalai hills have several *kulporul,* surnames or lineage identities, which govern their marital relations. Their surnames indicate the names of places, trees, plants, crops and birds.

The Malayali also differentiate among themselves on the basis of social and economic hierarchy and also on territorial level. In North Arcot Ambedkar District, the Malayali of Javadi hills consider themselves superior to those of the Elagiri and Pudurnadu hills. In Salem District, the Malayali of Yercaud consider themselves socially higher than their people in the Kolli, Kalvarayan, Pachamalai and Arunoothumalai hills. According to the Kolli hill Malayali, the Kalvarayan hill Malayali are poor, uncivilised and live like primitives. The emphasis on

these differences is to regulate their marriage alliances and, also, sometimes to impose social control.

The exogamous divisions (*kulporul,* or surnames) govern matrimonial alliances among the Malayali, but a few Malayalis in the Javadi, Elagiri, Pudurnadu hills follow the *anna-thambi, mama-machchan* custom because they do not have clans or surnames. They follow consanguinity as a preferred rule and marry cross-cousins — father's sister's daughter, and mother's brother's daughter. Maternal uncle-niece marriages are also practised.

The modes of acquiring mates by the Malayali are marriage by trial, by service, by mutual consent, by elopement and, at present, by negotiation. *Edippu* (trial) was once common among the Malayali. A boy may develop friendship with a girl and, with her consent, visit her house and have sex with her. The parents of the girl would not object to his visits. When she becomes pregnant, she expresses her willingness to marry the boy. The marriage would then be arranged, after accepting the bride-price of one pig, five measures of *samai* grain and a token cash amount. Nowadays, many changes are happening in the institution of marriage. Monogamy is the present norm, but polygyny (non-sororal) and junior sororate are permitted if the first wife is infertile. Vermilion, bangles, the *thali* and toe-rings are the marriage symbols. Giving *pariyam* (bride-price) is prevalent in most of the hills, but in Elagiri and in Yercaud, dowry is also paid. The dowry amount, at present, ranges from Rs.500-2000. They live in the patrilocal and, later, neolocal residence after the marriage. Divorce is permitted with the consent of the *kula panchayat* at a public ceremony. Grounds for divorce are barrenness, impotence and chronic sickness. Either spouse can initiate divorce proceedings, but compensation is given to the aggrieved party. If a woman is responsible for the divorce, she has to give back the *thali* to her divorced husband. Children are the responsibility of the father in divorce cases. A divorced woman can marry any person within the community under the *maru kannalam* custom.

Most Malayalis live in nuclear families. There are a few vertically extended and horizontally extended families too. Joking relationships and avoidance relationships exist between

consanguineal and affinal relatives. All the sons have rights to their ancestral property. They followed the rule of male primogeniture in the past, but nowadays they follow male equigeniture. The eldest son succeeds as the head of the family, after his father's death.

Malayali women enjoy equal status with their men. Though they do not have any rights over ancestral property, they participate in all the social, ritual and religious activities along with the men. They have decision-making powers and participate actively in economic activities. They contribute much to family income and also control family expenditure.

Malayali women are taken to their natal home for the first and second deliveries, during the seventh month. Most of the childbirths takes place at home with the help of an experienced elder woman, in the *taniya gudise*, a separate hut constructed near her house by her brother. The pollution period ends on the seventh day after birth. On that day, the mother and the child are brought home after a bath and the delivery hut is dismantled. The naming ceremony takes place on the seventh day at the child's father's house. For this function, in the Elagiri hills, no priest is employed, but in the Javadi, Kolli and Kalrayan hills, the Malayali name the child with the help of the *samayakaran*, a priest of the Malayali who is usually a devotee of Lord Venkatachalapathy of Tirupati. On the same day, they celebrate the *arana kayaru* ceremony in which a thread is tied around the child's waist.

The Malayali observe the puberty rite when a girl attains menarche. She is asked to sit in a separately constructed hut, the *taniya gudise,* which is erected by her maternal uncle (*tayimama*) using herbal leaves and bamboo. Pollution is observed for seven days. On the seventh day, the girl takes a bath and enters her house where a simple ceremony takes place.

In the past, Malayali marriages were celebrated over seven days, but this has been reduced to three days now. Customarily, the marriage is held in the bridegroom's residence. On the first day, they erect a *pandal* in front of the bridegroom's house. On the second day, (*kannalam*), the bridegroom ties the *thali* around the neck of the bride. On the third day

(*teerukoothu*), they celebrate the wedding grandly by feasting and drinking liquor. Pork is an important item in marriage and other ceremonies.

The Malayali bury their dead in a prone position. They do not engage the services of the barber and washerman during the funeral. They celebrate the *chinna kariyam* on the third day and *periya kariyam* on the 11th day after burial. In some areas, especially in the South Arcot and Tiruchchirappalli hills, they perform the *chinna kariyam* on the day following the burial. On the 11th day, *periya kariyam,* they worship the images or photos of their ancestors with the help of the *samayakaran* (priest) and sacrifice a pig, fowl or a sheep. They worship their ancestors and make offerings to them annually.

The Malayali are mainly a land-owning community. Earlier, they practised shifting cultivation, but now they have become settled agriculturists. They grow *samai, kambu, varagu, colam,* paddy, *ragi,* groundnut and pulses. They have also started to grow sugarcane and mulberry together with fruit trees and vegetables. They grow tamarind, jack, guava, pomegranate, mango, lemon, coconut and plantain trees. The Malayali sell their agricultural produce and minor forest produce to the cooperative society and in the nearby market.

The traditional Malayali political organisation has a close affiliation with their territory within the hills. For instance, all the Malayali settlements in the Javadi hills are divided into 18 territorial divisions, called *nadus.* Each *nadu* is headed by a *nattan.* Each Malayali habitat is headed by a *coran* who carries on his administrative work with the help of the *udhari* and the *ganasari.* All the *nattans* and *corans* are under the control of the *thalamai nattan* or *guru* or tribal chief. All these are hereditary posts. The *nattan* supervises marriage functions, festivals, traditional council organisation and funeral processions within the *nadu* and the *coran* has the same functions at the settlement or hamlet level. The *udhari,* being a village servant, carries messages of marriage, religious festivals and death. He also conveys decisions at council meeting to the *nattans. Ganasari* is a special temple servant who watches the organisation of the settlement temples and supplies flowers to the priest of the temple. *Nattans* and *corans* also settle various disputes which

upon the nature of the case.

There are Vaishnavites and Saivites among the Malayali. A few are *vibhuthi dharis* and acknowledge Lord Perumalappan's devotees as their gurus (spiritual leaders). They still consider the deity *Kairaman* as their community god. The Malayali have their own family deities as well as village deities. They also worship gods such as Arappaleswarar, Polerappan, Perumalappan, Vinayakar, Velayudappan, Tirupatisamy, Vedappan and Siva and goddesses such as Ittukamman, Kaliamman, Podariamman, Kallipaavai, Mariamman, Kateeramman and Kannimar. They worship Siva by the name of Nacharappan. They observe all Hindu festivals such as Tamil New Year's Day, Karthigai Deepam, Pongal and Sivaratri.

The Malayali accept both cooked and uncooked food from the Vellala Gounder, Konga Gounder, Reddiar, Muttirasi and Padayachi. They participate in all the religious, and other occasions of these communities. They share water sources with other communities except with the lower castes. They share burial grounds with other Hindus. They maintain cultivator-labour relations.

The Malayali send their children to school. They favour modern medicare. Couples prefer to have three children, after which, the women get sterilised. Government and voluntary organisations are helping them under rural development programmes.

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Nadu, the Nair suffix titles such as Menon, Nambiar, Nair or Nayar, Pillai, Panikkar, Kurup and Thambi.

The Mapilla are mainly found in the Kanniyakumari, Nellai Kattabomman, Madurai, Coimbatore and the Nilgiris Districts, with sporadic distribution in the other districts. Some of them run nonvegetarian hotels and some are timber merchants, leather garment merchants, fish and dry-fish sellers and grocers. In Madras, the Mappilla have an association called the 'Kerala Muslims Association'.

The Syrian Christian are mainly found in the Kanniyakumari, the Nilgiris, Coimbatore and Madras Districts. Three major divisions exist among the Syrian Christian, namely the Syrian Catholic, Jacobites and Marthomites. About 4000 families of the Syrian Christian are estimated to live in Madras city alone. The Malabar Independent Syrian Church, Marthoma Syrian Church, Orthodox Syrian Church, Jacobite Syrian Church, C.S.I. Malayali Congregation, Catholic Syrian Church and Caldean Syrian Church are the major churches of the Syrian Christian in Madras. Most of them belong to the Marthoma Syrian Church and the Orthodox Syrian Church, which have been in Madras for the last 75 years or so. When compared to the other Malayali, the Syrian Christian are educationally and economically well developed. Several industries, construction companies, commercial firms and educational institutions in Madras are owned by the Syrian Christian. Some are in government and private service.

There are many associations of the Malayali in the major cities of Tamil Nadu. The Malayali Club was started in Madras in 1897. It still functions, organising the Malayali and helping to celebrate their festive occasions. The Kerala Samajam, which was established fifty years ago, also has several branches in Tamil Nadu. The Malayali Samajam was established more recently in Madras to work for the unity and betterment of the Malayali. Regardless of their caste, the Malayali generally take part in the cultural activities of all these associations.

At the personal level, while looking for martial alliances, community endogamy is followed to the extent possible, by the Malayali. While choosing marital partners, the Malayali seek alliances from their own community living anywhere in

Kerala or Tamil Nadu. Cross-cousin marriages (both maternal and paternal) are allowed among them, but maternal uncle-niece alliances are prohibited. While men belonging to Kshatriya community are allowed to choose women from the Nair or Nayar, Nayar men cannot marry Kshatriya women. The Kshatriya, Ambalavasi (having subgroups such as Variar, Pisharodi, Marar, Poduval and Chakkiyar) and Nayar follow matrilineal descent, but the earlier norm of matrilocal residence is not followed.

Malayali Christians and Muslims celebrate their religious festivals as prescribed by their religions. The Malayali Hindus celebrate festivals such as Onam, Vishu, Tiruvathirai, Sivaratri, Deepavali, Navaratri and Pongal.

Some of the famous temple festivals held in Kerala are attended by Malayali Hindu pilgrims from Tamil Nadu every year, *e.g.* Guruvayoor Ekadasi, Trichur Pooram, Ashtami at Vaikom, Kottiyur festivals, Sabarimalai festival, Kodungalloor Bhagavati temple festival and Sivaratri festival at Alapuzha.

While celebrating Onam and Vishu, the Malayali generally arrange dance-dramas as part of the cultural programmes on these festive days. Folk-dances of Kerala, such as Kaikottikali or Tiruvathiraikali, Kathakali, Mohiniattam, Koodiattam and Chakkiarkoothu are performed by troupes from Kerala.

C.R. SATHYANARAYANAN

MANGALA

The Mangala, also known as Bajanthi and Malagallu, are Telugu-speaking barbers. They are different from the Tamil-speaking Ambattan, who are native to Tamil Nadu and work as musicians and barbers. Thurston (1909) records that "The Mangala use titles such as Anna and Gadu. Anna means brother and Gadu is a common suffix to the names of Telugus. A further title is Ayya (father)". But nowadays no one among them uses these traditional titles. They are now identified both at the local and regional levels.

Regarding the historical origin of the Mangala, Thurston (1909) quotes H.A.Stuart: "The Mangalas and Ambattans are the barber castes, and are probably of identical origin, but, like the potters, they have, by difference of locality, separated into Telugus and Tamilians, who do not intermarry... (They) are said to be the offspring of a Brahman by a Vaisya woman. The Telugu name is referred to the word *mangalam,* which means happiness and also cleansing and is applied to barbers, because they take part in marriage ceremonies and add to the happiness on the occasion by the melodious sounds of their flutes (*nagaswaram*), while they also contribute to the cleanliness of the people by shaving their bodies".

The Mangala consider themselves as having migrated to their present habitat from the coastal distrticts of Andhra Pradesh. According to the 1931 Census, the total population of the Mangala was 1,74,974. The community, is confined to Chengai-MGR, Coimbatore, Madras, North Arcot Ambedkar, Salem and South Arcot Districts.

The Mangala speak Telugu among themselves and Tamil with outsiders. They use the Tamil script.

The Mangala are occasional nonvegetarians, but beef and pork are taboo. Their staple food is rice, but occasionally they eat *ragi* and millets. They eat vegetables, pulses, roots, tubers, mushrooms and fruit. They use groundnut oil for cooking. Men drink *kallu* and alcoholic drinks of the cheaper variety. The Mangala drink tea and coffee and consume milk products. They smoke *beedis* and cigarettes. Most of them chew betel leaves with arecanuts and tobacco. They use snuff as well.

Among the Mangala there are two major endogamous divisions, Reddibhumi and Murikinadu. The former claim to be socially superior. In the past, they use to have *intiperlu* (surname) preceding their names. On migrating to Tamil Nadu they adopted the names of the villages where they settled, instead. They recognise the four-fold *varna* system and believe they are Sudras.

The Mangala practise endogamy at the subdivision level and exogamy at the surname level. They prefer consanguineous marriages — maternal uncle-niece, paternal cross-cousins and maternal cross-cousins. The age at marriage for girls is 12-16 years and for boys, 18-24. The socially approved form of marriage is by mutual consent and negotiation. Monogamy is the norm. Polygamy is permitted in case the first wife is sterile. In that case, the second wife could be the younger sister of the first wife (sororate-junior) or any other woman (non-sororal). Vermilion, the *thali* and toe-rings serve as symbols of marriage. Dowry is offered in the form of gold ornaments to the bride. After marriage, the new couple live in the patrilocal residence. If the bridegroom has many brothers and resources are limited, the situation may warrant a neolocal residence.

In the Mangala community, only the husband can initiate divorce, with social approval, on grounds of adultery or barrenness or maladjustment. In such cases, the marriage expenses and the dowry offered in kind have to be returned to the bride's parents. Whenever couples are separated or divorced, children are the responsibility of the father. Only the male divorcee is permitted to remarry. Widowers are allowed to remarry. The community has now liberalised rules of both divorce and remarriage, thus making it possible for a woman also to divorce and to remarry.

The Mangala families are mixed extended in nature, but a few nuclear families do exist. They do not practise joking or avoidance relationships with anyone in the family. Property is inherited by all the sons equally. The eldest son succeeds as the family head. Daughters do not have a right over ancestral property, unless they have no brothers.

Mangala women have a lower status than their men. They

do participate in economic activities and contribute to the family income. They also control family expenditure. Women of this community have decision-making powers.

When a Mangala woman is pregnant for the first time, her parents celebrate a ritual *seemantham* at their house for her well being. This is usually performed in the seventh or ninth month. On this occasion the pregnant woman wears new clothes, flowers and lots of glass bangles. At the function, *muthaidulu* (women with children and living husbands) sing folk-songs and bless the woman. Three kinds of fruit, three kinds of flowers and five varieties of *palaharam* (sweets and savouries) are placed before her, then distributed, along with *thamboolam* (betel leaves and arecanuts), to everyone assembled. Post-delivery pollution is observed for nine days and is ended with purificatory baths for the mother and the child. The naming ceremony is held when the child is three months old, after consulting an astrologer. Children are tonsured when they are one or three.

When a Mangala girl attains puberty, she is confined to a hut specially erected for the purpose in a corner of the house. On the day, rice soaked in water and mixed with jaggery (unrefined sugar), called *dadibiyyam*, is distributed to everyone. This is to ward off the evil spirits which may otherwise harm the girl. On the 9th or 15th day, she is given *nalugu* (anointing by various pastes), a ceremonial bath and new clothes. She is decorated like a bride and brought into the house accompanied by *melam* (*nadaswaram* and *meddela* music). This ritual is commonly known as *shobanam*.

In the Mangala community, marriages are performed either at the bride's residence or at a nearby temple. On the night before the wedding, a ritual known as *pradhanam* is performed. *Muhurtham*, the auspicious time when the bridegroom ties the *mangalasutram* around the neck of the bride, is officiated at by a Brahman priest. *Kasiyatra*, the mock pilgrimage to Varanasi, just before *muhurtham*, is practised by only the Saivites. The Reddibhumi Mangala wear two gold discs in their *mangalasutram* whereas the Murikinadu subgroup wear only one. The wedding feast is given by the bride's parents. On the next day, the new couple, with a few relatives, visit the bridegroom's house and

the couple return to the bride's parents' house where the consummation ceremony takes place.

The Mangala bury their dead, except the eldest children in a family, who are cremated. The eldest son performs the last rites. The relatives observe pollution for 9 or. 14 days. They observe *chinnadinam* on the third day and pour milk on the grave. They perform *peddadinam* or *peddakarma* to terminate pollution. The rituals are officiated at by a Brahman priest. If the deceased was a male, his wife's *thali* would be cut, bangles broken, toe-rings removed and vermilion on the forehead wiped out on this day. If the deceased is a female, her husband's *molathadu* (waist thread) is cut. The Mangala do not practise ancestor worship.

A majority of the Mangala still serve as barbers and musicians. Many trap birds as a hobby. Those who are educated have found other employment in both governmental and private agencies. Their women continue to serve as midwives. They are now being trained by primary health centres and voluntary health organisations to deliver better healthcare at the village level. Some of them work as trained midwives in health centres.

The Mangala have no caste councils. Each family acts for itself. If there is a dispute, the two families involved meet and sort out the problems between them.

The Mangala are Hindus and worship all the Hindu deities. A majority of them either worship Siva or Vishnu. A Brahman priest officiates at marriages and *peddakarma*. The major festivals which they celebrate are Sankranti, Ugadi, Adi Krithigai and Deepavali.

A few Mangala have embraced Christianity for social and economic reasons. But they continue to observe pre-conversion rituals, such as pubertal rites and pre-delivery and childhood rituals. Hindus and Christians freely intermarry and the new couple have the freedom to choose their own religion.

The Mangala are well known for their proficiency in story-telling. Folk-songs are sung by their women on occasions such as the child-naming ceremonies and *seemantham*. Mangala men are expert musicians.

Traditionally, the Mangala are considered a non-polluting

caste. They are allowed to enter the houses of the higher castes. They do not exchange but accept food, either raw or cooked and water from all other communities except the Mala and Madiga. They share cremation or burial grounds with other castes and visit the same religious shrines. The men participate in traditional festivals and festivities and have the specific role of playing music on those occasions.

Through the Mangala's professions (barbers, musicians and midwives), a patron-client relationship exists with other communities. The educated among them have availed of opportunities and become white-collar employees, teachers, engineers, doctors, nurses, military personnel and musicians. But political leadership is yet to emerge from this community.

The Mangala send their children to school. But many students drop out at various levels due to a variety of social reasons. Girls usually pursue their studies only up to the primary level. On attaining puberty, they are withdrawn from school and taught household work, midwifery and the knowledge of a few traditional herbal medicines for various minor ailments. Boys are sent to school upto the higher secondary level. They are also trained to shave others, to trap birds and to play musical instruments from a young age. From 16 years onwards, they are expected to support their families by participating in economic activities.

The Mangala favour both traditional and modern medicare. They favour family planning and prefer to have two children. They have access to all civic amenities.

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MANIYAKKARAN

Maniyakkaran, once served in the palaces of the *zamindars* and chieftains of such places as Ettaiyapuram, Kovilpatti, Attankarai and Sattur. They form an endogamous group and a separate caste of their own. Their job was cooking, cleaning the palace buildings, looking after the *zamin*'s cattle, lands and the harvest. But they were not engaged as clerks, officers or soldiers. They are also known as Adappakkaran. Now they are agriculturalists.

Etymologically, the name Maniyakkaran means an overseer, as a title or synonym of the Parivaram and Sembadavan, but derived from *mani,* meaning a 'bell', as a name of the sub-division of the Idiyan shepherds. It has been corrupted into Monegar, the title of the headman of a village in the Tamil country (Thurston, 1909). They are mainly distributed in the Chidambaranar, Ramanathapuram and Kamaraj Districts. They use Maniyakkaran as their surname.

Tamil is the mother tongue of the Maniyakkaran. They use the Tamil script.

The Maniyakkaran are nonvegetarian. They eat pork, but not beef. Their staple food is rice, *kambu, cholam* and *keppai* (*ragi*). They eat all pulses, vegatables and, occasionally, fruits. They use groundnut oil and gingelly oil for cooking. They consume milk and milk products. They drink coffee and tea. Men drink liquor occasionally. Some of them smoke *beedis,* cigarettes or *suruttu* (cigar). Some chew betel leaves, with or without tobacco, and also use snuff.

The Maniyakkarar, as a whole, are an endogamous group. They are Sudras in the *varna* order. They rank equal to the Maravar in the social hierarchy.

Marriages are arranged through negotiations. The Maniyakkaran marry cross-cousins and sister's daughters. The *thali* is the marriage symbol and they call it *pottu thali.* Monogamy is the norm but polygyny is allowed when the first wife is barren. Dowry is paid in kind and cash. Boys are generally married at the age of 21-25 years and girls between 16 and 20. They permit divorce and widow remarriages. Divorce is allowed by the caste panchayat after the payment of a fine. Either spouse

can initiate divorce. No compensation is given. After divorce, the sons live with the father and the daughters live with the mother. They are a patrilocal and a patrilineal society.

The family pattern of the Maniyakkaran is either nuclear or joint. After marriage, the sons live with their parents if they desire, otherwise they live separately. Property is divided only after the marriages of all sons and daughters. It is divided among the sons equally. Sons look after their parents in their old age. In case of the premature death of the father, the eldest son becomes the head of the family. If the children are young, the mother acts as the head till the eldest son grows up. Avoidance relations do not exist, but joking relationships are permitted between brothers-in-law and sisters-in-law.

Maniyakkaran women are mostly confined to domestic work. They participate in all social and religious functions. Women work as agricultural labourers to support the family economically. They do not get any share in their parents' properties.

A Maniyakkaran woman's first delivery is arranged in her natal home. The parents visit her house during the seventh or ninth month and observe the *kacci oothuthal* ritual after which they serve a nonvegetarian meal to all the relatives and give *cul* (pregnancy) bangles to her. They then take her to their house. When the child is born, it is given *cenai* (sugar water) as its first food. Pollution is observed for seven days. On the seventh day, the mother and child are given ceremonial baths and the house is cleaned. The mother's parents give her a dhoti, stick and rope to make the cradle. During the pollution period, the washerwoman supplies the new mother with saris (*mattu*).

The Maniyakkaran do not observe any naming ceremony. The child is named, within two months, after a deity or ancestor. The first hair-removing and ear-boring ceremonies are performed within a year in the Murugan temple at Tiruchendur or in their family deity's temple. The barber and the goldsmith, respectively, conduct them. The maternal uncle gives the child the ear-studs. The mother and the child return to their own house in the third month. On this day, the child's father observes the *kacci oothuthal* ceremony and arranges a nonvegetarian feast to all the relatives.

On attaining puberty, the Maniyakkaran girl is given a bath and kept in seclusion. An iron implement is kept with her. A separate plate and a glass are given to her for her meals. The maternal uncle brings her sweets and bananas. Pollution is observed for 9-16 days. On the last day they observe the *sadangu* (puberty) ceremony. The maternal uncle gives her a sari. The elders bless her by applying *tiruneer* (sacred ash). A feast is given. The relatives give the girl either *moi* (money) or gifts.

A prospective bridegroom's parents initiate the marriage proposal, among the Maniyakkaran. They consult astrologers to match the horoscopes of the boy and the girl and, if they agree, they arrange the betrothal ceremony in the girl's house. The marriage takes place at the bridegroom's house. The marriage sari and the *thali* are purchased by the bridegroom's parents. An elderly person hands the *thali* to the bridegroom, after it has been blessed. He ties it around the neck of the bride. The bridegroom's sister, who stands behind the bride, helps the bridegroom to tie the *thali*. Then the bride and the bridegroom exchange garlands three times. The consummation ceremony takes place either in the bride's or in the bridegroom's house. In earlier times, Maniyakkaran marriages took place in the presence of the *zamindar* and in his palace. Consequently, the zamindar bore all the expenses of the function including the marriage sari and *thali*.

The Maniyakkaran bury their dead, but cremate the body if the deceased is a firstborn. The women go to the nearby *niravi* (water-tank) to bring water to bathe the corpse. It is draped in a new white cloth and garlanded. They then take it on the bier (made by themselves) to the burial ground. While burying the body, the head is placed to the south. The Chakkiliyan digs the grave or helps in the cremation. The Chakkiliyan also beats drums in the funeral procession. The eldest son performs the *kolli* at the burial ground while the daughters do it before the bier is lifted if the deceased does not have a male issue. All the sons shave their heads at the burial ground. The next day, they offer milk to the deceased at the grave or the cremation spot. They collect the ashes in a small earthern pot and dispose of them in the river or sea

on the following New Moon Day in the presence of a Brahman. Pollution is observed for five to ten days. On the last day, they perform the death ceremony and serve a nonvegetarian feast.

Land is the major source of income for the Maniyakkaran. They are small farmers owning dry land and entirely depend upon rainwater. Many of them work as agricultural or other kinds of labourers. Some of them are famous for sweet preparations and a few work in sweetstalls. Their women work as labourers in the agricultural lands or in match factories.

The Maniyakkkaran have their own caste panchayat. All disputes, including divorces, are settled in the caste panchayat. Their leader is elected by the members of the caste.

The Maniyakkaran worship all Hindu deities, such as Murugan, Siva, Vinayagar and Vishnu. They worship deities such as Mariammal, Kaliammal, Karuppasamy and Madasamy. In Ettaiyapuram, they have a temple for Kaliammal who is worshipped in the Tamil month *Panguni*. Goats are sacrificed to the goddess. They celebrate Deepavali, Pongal, Karthigai and Adi.

The relation of the Maniyakkaran with other castes of the area are cordial. They eat in the house of all other communities except the Harijans. But the Brahman and the Pillai do not eat in their houses. They have their own burial ground. They visit temples visited by others and participate in all festivals. They have their own barber and washerman. They take the services of the Chakkiliyan.

The Maniyakkaran educate their children and avail of the mid-day meal programme. They are benefited by all developmental programmes. They use both indigenous and modern medicare and favour family planning.

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MANIYATTIKKARAN

The Maniyattikkaran are nomadic deity-displayers and fortune-tellers of Tamil Nadu. They are also known as Mannetikkaran, Devarakulam and Devarallu, and Devara. Maniyattikkaran is a Tamil word which simply means, 'bell players' (*mani* = bell; *attikkaran* = players). They generally start at midnight on their fortune-telling rounds. During the day they go for alm collection with a *devara* (deity) idol on head. So they were named Devargal by other castes. According to Thurston (1909), they are a section of the Golla community. Placing the idol at the end of a street, first they do *puja* before it, then walk up and down flaggellating themselves with a rope. "As they carry the Gods (*devarlu*) about, these people are called Devarallu." Originally, they belonged to Andhra Pradesh but around three decades ago they migrated to adjoining states, such as Tamil Nadu. Because of their wider nomadic movements, they obtained regional level identification. At present, they mainly inhabit the districts of South Arcot, North Arcot Ambedkar and Madras. They speak Telugu among themselves and Tamil with others. Both men and women wear a variety of bead necklaces and large *kumkum bottu* on their forheads. Men wear a *datti* (waistbelt), with a number of small bells on it, and a short skirt. They also wear a turban. They carry a big bell, *veerajati,* and a small knife. While on their alm collecting rounds, they cut the skin on their arms and allow the blood to flow. On seeing this, pedestrians and householders quickly give them alms to get rid of them. Some of them are magicians and jugglers.

The Maniyattikkaran are regular nonvegetarian, who eat pork, rodents and termites. Their staple food is rice. They consume all kinds of grams, vegetables, roots and tubers. Both men and women drink liquor. They consume milk and milk products. They drink coffee and tea. Most of them smoke either *beedis* or cigarettes. Both men and women chew tobacco and betel.

The Maniyattikkaran are divided into three subgroups, *viz.* Manchi Devara (good *devara*), Boya Devara (hunters and

'creators of terror' while doing their profession) and Kalekatra Devara (jugglers and magicians). These subgroups have different identification marks and occupational differences. The Manchi Devara group carry the deities, such as Ankalamma, Poleramma, Pedapalamma and Chengalamma, on their heads and hold a *veerajati* (a whip) and a *sulam* (trident). They play music with the *palakaganta* (bell). The Boya Devara are hunters and also display deities. But they carry only the idol of Kanakadurga on their heads and hold the *veerajati* in the right hand, and a knife in the left. They cut the skin of their arms with the knife and allow the blood to flow. The women play the *eendram* (a percussion musical instrument). The Kalekatra Devara are magicians and jugglers. They display deities occasionally. The Manchi Devara are said to be superior to the other two groups. They have *inteperlu* (surnames or lineages) such as Talluru, Pasuplati, Palaparti, Agni and Konamgi to regulate marriage alliances and to indicate ancestry.

The Maniyattikkaran follow subgroup endogamy and lineage exogamy. They prefer consanguineous marriages and also cross-cousin and uncle-niece marriages. Both levirate and sororate are allowed. Girls get married before attaining puberty, but the consummation takes place after they attain puberty. The bride is sent to her husband's house after her third menstruation. Marriages are arranged by negotiation. Monogamy is the norm. Vermilion, the *thali* and *metti* are the marriage symbols for women. *Oli* (bride price) is paid. Their rule of residence is patrilocal. Divorce is allowed for either sex on grounds of adultery, barrenness, maladjustment, impotence, chronic sickness, cruelty and insanity. If the wife initiates the divorce, she has to pay back the *oli* to the husband. The children stay with either the father or mother, as suggested by the *jati panchayat*. Remarriage for both the divorced and widowed of either sex is allowed.

Nuclear families predominate among the Maniyattikkaran. They observe avoidance relationships with the father-in-law and mother-in-law. They joke with brothers-in-law, sisters-in-law as well as with grandparents. Property is shared equally by all the sons of the first, legal, wife. The eldest son succeeds his father as the head of the family.

Maniyattikkaran women accompany their men when they go for displaying the deity, playing the music and accepting the alms. Sometimes, the women carry the deity on their heads and the men play the music and use the *veerajati* on their bodies. A few women are agricultural labourers. Women actively participate in social functions, and religious activities. They observe fasting on certain auspicious days in honour of their deities. Nowadays a few women work as maidservants and menial labourers.

Generally, delivery is conducted at home with the help of an experienced midwife from their community. Post-delivery pollution is observed for three days. On the third day, *antusnanam* (ceremonial bath) and Gowri puja are observed to mark the end of pollution. On the same day the child is named. Some go to a temple to name the child. Tonsuring and ear-boring ceremonies are observed at a temple within the first year or in the third year. They sacrifice a goat or sheep to the deity before the tonsuring. They put a *rudraksha dandalu* (garland made of the seeds of the *Elaeocarpus ganitrus*) around the child's neck after the tonsuring ceremony. When a boy is 12 or 15, he is ceremonially allowed to display the deity and handle the *veerajati*. Puberty rites are observed for girls at the time of the first menstruation. When a girl attains puberty, she is secluded in a small temporary hut constructed with green leaves. The pollution lasts for seven days and ends with a ceremonial both. The girl's maternal uncle gives her new clothes during the *savatta perantam* (puberty ceremony). A feast is arranged for the invitees.

Maniyattikkaran weddings are held at the bride's or bridegroom's residence., Both families together arrange the marriage feast. The consummation ceremony takes place on an auspicious day in the bride's natal home.

When a death occurs in the Maniyattikkaran community, the corpse is bathed, wrapped in new clothes and adorned with flowers. Then it is placed on a bier and carried to the burial ground. Funeral music is played during the procession. The dead are buried. All the sons of the deceased tonsure their heads and shave their moustaches and beards. Death pollution is observed for 16 days. On the day following the

burial, *palpoyadam* (offering milk) is observed at the burial ground.

The Maniyattikkaran are traditional nomadic, fortune-tellers and deity displayers and receive alms from other communities. Most of them are still mainly dependent on alm collection. They walk down the streets, playing on traditional musical instruments. Generally, men start at midnight, fortune-telling and playing a bell. They stand before a house and tell future prosperity of the family members. After sunrise, they start collecting alm from the households and return to their dwellings to have their meals. They then start the deity display by midday and end it before sunset. A few are in menial jobs in government and private organisations.

The Maniyattikkaran have a *jati panchayat* for social control. The *thalaivar* (headman) of the panchayat is selected by voice vote. All kinds of disputes, including divorce cases are settled in the *jati kootam* (gathering of community elders). The entire community has a common *jati panchayat*. The *kootam* is held in the month of *Vaigasi* every year to settle major disputes. They now have a caste association, the Tamil Nadu Devendrakula Mannettikkaran Nala Sangam, for their welfare and it is working mainly to seek caste certificates in the Devendrakullattan name.

The Maniyattikkaran are Hindus. They mainly worship village deities and maintain the sanctity of their deities. Their *kula devata* (community deities) are Poleramma, Ankalamma, Pedepalemma, Chengalamma and Kanakadurga. Each Maniyattikkaran habitat has a Poleramma temple. They celebrate the Poleramma fair for three days in the *Chitthirai* month, starting on the Full Moon Day. They also celebrate Deepavali, Dussehra, Vinayaka Chaturthi, Pongal and Ugadi. The Chengalamma *jatra* (festival) is celebrated on Amavasya day of the *Panguni* month and the Gangamma *jatra* is celebrated in the *Chitthirai* month at Tirupati.

The Maniyattikkaran men and women sing a variety of folksongs during fairs and festivals as well as while alm collection. They play musical instruments, such as the *palaka ganta* (bell), *eendram* and *suhi*.

The Maniyattikkaran accept cooked rice and water from the

higher castes but not from the Scheduled Castes and service castes. Traditionally they do not carry their deities to the houses of the Scheduled Castes and service castes. But, no other community accepts water and food from them. They share wells and cremation grounds with other communities. They visit the common religious shrines and participate in temple fairs and festivals along with others.

Their children do not get formal education because of their nomadic life. They favour both indigenous and modern medicare. They do not opt for family planning and prefer four or more children. They have access to drinking water. Most of them are dependent on moneylenders and shopkeepers for credit.

JAKKA PARTHASARATHY

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MANNAN

The Mannan are distributed in the Kanniyakumari and Tirunelveli Districts. They are also known as Vannan and Velan. Locally they are identified by their occupation, *i.e.* laundering clothes. They perceive their distribution at the local level. In other parts of Tamil Nadu, particularly in hilly areas, there is another community, also called Mannan, but they are a hill tribe and have no connection with the Scheduled Caste Mannans of Kanniyakumari and Tirunelveli. A legend regarding the origin of the Mannan narrates that, once upon a time, when Parameswara and his wife Parvathi were amusing themselves, the latter made an earthen elephant which was accidentally trodden on by Parameswara. From this arose a man who stood bowing before them. He was assigned his present occupation, *i.e.* washing soiled clothes.

The Mannan population in Tamil Nadu is only 274 (1981 Census). Their mother tongue is Tamil, and they use the Tamil script.

The Mannan, both Hindu and Christian, are nonvegetarian. Their staple food is rice, supplemented with millets and *ragi*. They consume most pulses, vegetables, roots, tubers and fruits. They use groundnut, gingelly and sunflower oils for cooking. The Mannan males drink liquor. They consume milk products, tea and coffee. Some of the men smoke *beedis* and cigarettes. Both men and women chew tobacco, betel leaf, and nut. A few of them inhale snuff.

The Mannan of Kanniyakumari and Tirunelveli are divided into four clans, the Choppan, Perumannan, Punakkadan and Puliyakkadan. The clans regulate their marital alliances and indicate descent. They are aware of the Hindu *varna* system and consider themselves Sudras.

The Mannan live in both nuclear and extended families, though the former are on the rise. An avoidance relationship exists between mother-in-law and son-in-law, younger brother's wife and elder brother-in-law (husband's elder brother). A joking relationship exists between sister-in-law (elder brother's wife) and brother-in-law (husband's younger brother), with

sister-in-law (wife's elder and younger sisters) with brother-in-law (wife's elder and younger brothers). The community follows patrilineal descent and patrilocal and neolocal residence. They follow the rule of male equigniture in inheritance, *i.e.* sons get equal shares of the ancestral property. The eldest son succeeds as the head of the family after the death of his parents.

Mannan women have no rights to parental property. They collect clothes from their client's houses once or twice in a week and return the clean laundry. They have a role in social functions and religious rituals. Though they contribute to the family income, they do not have decision-making powers. Mannan women also act as midwives.

The Mannan observe *valaikappu* as a pre-delivery ritual in the seventh or ninth month of a woman's first pregnancy. The mother of the pregnant woman gives her *palagaram* (sweet items) and a new sari and bangles. After the *valaikappu,* she is taken to her natal home, where the first delivery takes place. They observe birth pollution for 16 days. During this period the mother and child are kept in seclusion. On the 17th day, they perform the naming ceremony. Mannan Christians observe the name-giving ceremony after one year. Children are tonsured when they are one. The first feeding of cereals ceremony is observed when the child is nine months old. The community observe *sadangu* (puberty ceremony) for girls. When a girl attains menarche, she is kept in seclusion for 15 days. On the 16th day, she is given a ritual bath by her maternal uncle's daughter. Her maternal uncle gifts her new clothes and ornaments. A nonvegetarian feast is arranged for relatives who attend the ceremony.

Marriage is usually negotiated by the elders. Cross-cousin marriages, such as marriage with father's sister's daughter and with mother's brother's daughter, are preferred. Both sororate and levirate are allowed. Boys marry between 20 and 25 years, girls between 18 and 22. In the past, polygamy was common among the Mannan, but nowadays monogamy is the norm. The *thali* is the symbol of marriage. The practice of paying bride-price has been replaced by that of dowry. Before finalising the date of the marriage, the horoscopes of the boy and girl are

matched. The wedding take place at the bride's residence. The expenses of the wedding feast are shared by both families. The rule of residence after marriage is either patrilocal or neolocal. Divorce is permitted, on grounds of adultery and maladjustment. Divorce compensation is given to the wife. Either spouse can initiate divorce proceedings. Children are the responsibility of both parents in such cases. Widow and widower remarriages are permitted.

The dead are cremated by the Hindu Mannan, but buried by the Mannan Christian. They observe death pollution for 15 days. The eldest son is the chief mourner. On the third day after the death, they collect the bones and ashes from the cremation ground and dispose of them in water.

The traditional occupation of the Mannan is washing of soiled clothes. The washing is generally done by the women, who collect clothes from neighbouring communities and nearby laundries once or twice a week and return them after washing for payment in cash. Their children also help in this traditional work. They wash the clothes of all communities. The Mannan men are exorcists, devil-dancers and physicians to other communities. The Mannan provide the *mattu*, or cleaned clothes, for girls of other communities at the time of their puberty rites. Nowadays, some of the Mannan are employed in government or private services.

The Mannan have a traditional caste council, to settle disputes among the community members. Election to the caste council is by voice vote. Forms of punishment handed out by the caste council are social boycott and cash fines. In case of adultery, the persons are excommunicated, but in case of elopement the male is forced to marry the girl. For petty theft, the culprit is fined a few rupees.

The Mannan are Hindus, but some have become Christians. Sudalai and Bhagavathi Amman are their family deities. They worship all other Hindu deities, such as Murugan, Narayana, Rama and Mahakali Amman. They observe all Hindu festivals, such as Pongal, Deepavali, Kartigai and Onam. Mannan Christians visit their church regularly and observe Christmas, Good Friday and Easter.

The Mannan accept water and food from all other commu-

nities, but cannot exchange with others because most of the communities do not accept any food or water from them. They share wells and cremation grounds with other communities. The Mannan perform certain ceremonies in connection with Mundian, a deity who watches over cattle. At the Puram festival, they carry the *vengida koda*, or prosperity umbrella, made up of many of red, green, orange, black and white cloth, supported on a long bamboo pole. The Mannan act as *pujaris* (priests) in the Bhagavati temple. A few are in white-collar jobs.

Mannan boys study upto secondary school level. Some of them have completed graduation and a very few have got postgraduate degrees. Boys drop out from studies due to poverty. They use indigenous as well as modern medicare. They favour family planning and limit their families to three children. They have access to civic amenities.

N.C. SARKAR

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MAPPILLA

The Mappilla are also known as Moplaha, Mopla, and Moppila. Some families use titles such as Koya, Tangal and Musaliar. *Mappilla* is a Malayalam word which means 'bridegroom' or 'son-in-law'. Some say that the word *Mappilla* is an abbreviation of *maha* (great) and *pilla* (child), which means 'great child'. A few of them feel that *mappilla* was the honorific conferred on the early Musalmans of the Malabar coast. They feel that the community is a hybrid race of immigrant Muslims and local caste women of Kerala. Regarding the origin of the community, it is said that "in the ninth century of the Christian era, a party of Muslim piligrims, on their way to a sacred shrine in Ceylon, chanced to visit the capital of the Perumal the King of Malabar, and he, becoming a convert to their faith, subsequently accompanied them to Arabia (where he died)." It is further stated that the Perumal, becoming anxious of establishing his new faith in Malabar, with suitable places of worship, sent his followers with letters to all the chieftains whom he had appointed in his stead, requiring them to give land for mosques and to endow them. The Perumal's instructions were carried out and nine mosques were founded and endowed in various parts of Malabar. Whatever truth there may be in these accounts, it is certain that, at a very early period, the Arabs had settled for commercial purposes on the Malabar coast, had contracted alliances with the women of the country and that the mixed race thus formed had begun to be known as the Mappilla. Some of the Mappilla migrated to Tamil Nadu from Kerala around three centuries ago in search of better livelihood. Their concentration is more in the adjoining districts of Tamil Nadu and Kerala, *viz.* the Nilgiris, Kanniyakumari and Tirunelveli. However, there is a fair distribution of them in all the districts of Tamil Nadu.

The Mappilla converse in Malayalam among themselves and in Tamil with others. They use both Malayalam and Tamil scripts. Both sexes of the Mappilla have distinctive identification marks. Generally, the men wear the *mundu* (white cloth with purple or other coloured borders). It is tied on the left and kept in position by a thin metal chain. Some keep a small

knife at the waist. They wear small cap of white or black. Some wear an ordinary white turban. A few wear bright coloured scarfs. Generally, most of the men shave their heads clean but sport beards. The women wear *mundus* of bright colours with a white loose embroidered bodice and a veil or scarf on the head. Women wear a variety of ornaments; *mala, minni, arkapavan*, and *kummatu* (earrings), bracelets and anklets. Women also wear a waistbelt, *aranjolam*, made of silver or brass.

Most Mappillas are regular nonvegetarian. They don't eat pork. They consume all varieties of vegetables, pulses, roots and tubers. Their staple food is rice. Traditionally, they are prohibited from drinking liquor, but a few are now take liquor occasionally. Their fruit consumption is moderate. They consume milk and milk products. Traditionally, they do not smoke, but most of them are habituated to smoking *beedis* and cigarettes. Both men and women chew betel and tobacco. A few of them use snuff.

The Mappilla are divided into a number of *tharavads* (lineages), *viz*. Mozhikal, Musaliargattu, Kalatingal, Valiayaveeduakal, Chakkalakunneu, Thottiattal, Bombalan, Varithodiga, Tirultial, Kuttaseri, Vuttikkadan, Votakkalan, Kundipulakkan, Alukkal, Tanian, Govugal, Patharai, Variyttodi, Ariparatodi, Perumpallikazikal, Amanat Saripuram, Naduthodi Vayalil, Makkala, Thottaikar, Kurial Mazampulli, Kadavattu Pungadal and Karimpana. Each *tharavad* is their original household name. Hierarchical differentiation does not exist between the *tharavads*. The *tharavads* indicate ancestry.

The Mappilla follow community level endogamy. Both parallel and cross-cousin marriages are permitted. Both levirate and sororate are allowed and acceptable. Both intra- and inter*tharavad* marriages are allowed. The mode of acquiring a mate is through negotiation. The age at marriage for boys is between 21 and 25 years and for girls 18 and 20. The marital norm is monogamy. Only a few polygamous marriages are found. They do not have any kind of marriage symbol. The *mehar* (bride-price) is paid instantly or on demand. Divorce is allowed by social approval, on grounds of adultery, barrenness, maladjustment, impotence and insanity. Only the husband can initiate divorce. Children are the responsibility of

the mother in divorce cases, but the children's father supports them till they become adults. The widowed and divorced of both the sexes are allowed to remarry. The dowry system prevails among them. The *nikha* (marriage) ceremony is performed at the bride's residence. A few of them conduct it at public *mandapams*. Soon after the *nikha*, the newly-married couple go to the bridegroom's house. The marriage feast is given at the houses of both families. The consummation ceremony (*adiratri*) is at the bridegroom's house.

Both nuclear and vertically extended families are found among the Mappilla. They do not have any avoidance relationship. However, women have a seclusion system in the community. There is a joking relationship between sister-in-law and husband's younger brother, between wife's younger sister and brother as well as between grandparents and grandchildren. The Mappilla give shares in their property to daughters too. The daughters get half the share of the sons. The rule of succession is by eldest son. The rule of residence is patrilocal or neolocal. There is a rise in nuclear families.

Mappilla women participate in all agricultural operations. The women also look after petty trade. Some educated women work in both private and government organisations. Others work as agricultural labourers, plantation labourers and industrial labourers. Women have a role in social functions and religious rituals. Women substantially contribute to the family income and expenditure. The women are said to have a lower status than the men.

The Mappilla observe a pre-delivery ritual during the seventh or ninth month of a woman's first pregnancy. Birth pollution lasts for 40 days. On the 40th day, a ceremonial bath (*nappadu kulikathu*) is given to the mother and the child. The naming ceremony is held on the same day. The child is adorned with the *aranjala* (waistband) and *tala* or *tada* (anklets). On the 49th day, they tonsure the child. In the past, all compulsorily observed the *aqiqa* ceremony, but it is limited to the affluent now. The Mappilla perform circumcision (*sunnath kalyanam*) for boys at the age of five. An *ossan* (Mappilla barber) conducts the circumcision. Some now go to hospital for the circumcision. They observe the *baligh hona* ceremony for girls attaining puberty.

The Mappilla bury their dead in a north-south direction. They do not observe any kind of death pollution. They observe mourning for three days. They observe ancestor worship once a year, on the occasion of the Shab-e-Barat festival.

Land is the main economic resources for the Mappilla. These resources are controlled by individual proprietorship. It is mainly a land-owning community. Some of them engage in fishing. The Mappilla are engaged in a variety of occupations. Their primary occupations are cultivation and trade. Some practise animal husbandry. The community has weavers, carpenters and masons. Some of the educated persons work in both private and government organisations. A few of them work as skilled and unskilled labourers. In the Nilgiris, most of them are plantation labourers.

The Mappilla have a traditional caste council which is always connected to the mosque. It is called *paripalana sangam*. It consists of 40 members. However, this number varies from mosque to mosque. It is involved in all the social-religious activities of the community. The executive members of the *sangam* are elected by voice vote. Their traditional *mazeed* committee works for the welfare of the community. It has judicial powers, such as social boycott and excommunication in case of repeated crimes and offences. The committee also listens to divorce cases and settles them. This body is responsible for the maintenance of the *mazeed* (mosque) and *madarasa* (Islamic school).

The Mappilla are Muslims, belonging to the Sunni sect. They go to different pilgrimage centres within the country, *viz*. Ajmer, Nagore, Eravadi, Muttapet, Nambaram, Puttampalli, as well as outside the country, to Mecca and Medina. Their sacred specialists are from the same community and are called *musaliar*. They preach religion and cure ailments and are said to protect people from evil spirits. They also officiate at birth, *sunnath kalyanam*, marriage and death rites. They observe Ramzan, Muharram, Shab-e-barat, Bakrid and Milad-ul-Nabi.

The Mappilla accept water and food and exchange the same with higher caste Hindus. They share wells with all other communities. They share burial grounds with other Muslims. They visit all religious shrines of the Sunni sect. However, they

have separate mosques in each and every place. The community has entrepreneurs, businessmen, scholars, white-collar job-holders at various levels.

The affluent Mappillas educate their children, but the poorer sections do not do so. Affluent students study upto postgraduation and also go into a variety of professional courses. Poorer students drop out from school. Most Mapilla youth learn Arabic at their *madarasa*. They do not favour family planning. They have access to civic amenities.

V.S. DEEP KUMAR

MARAIKAYAR

The Maraikayar, akin to the Labbai in origin, are immigrant traders. They use Maraikayar as a title. Etymologically, the name Maraikayar is derived from the Arab *markab,* meaning boat, a reference to their arriving in India in boats many generations ago and settling here by marrying local women.

According to the 1901 Census, the total population of the Maraikayar is 4651. They are chiefly distributed in Thanjavur, South Arcot and Tiruchchirappalli Districts, but sparsely in the other districts of Tamil Nadu. They speak Tamil and use its script.

The Maraikayar are nonvegetarian, but do not eat pork. Their staple foods are rice and wheat. They consume locally available pulses, vegetables, roots and fruit. They do not drink liquor. They consume milk, milk products, coffee and tea. They smoke *beedis,* cigarettes and cheroots. Some of them use snuff. They chew betel and tobacco with lime. Every girl is gifted with a metal box, during her marriage, to keep the betel leaves, lime and betel nuts.

There are no social divisions among the Maraikayar. Of late, the youth have given up the title Maraikayar. The Maraikayar practice endogamy at the community level. But some of them are now making alliances with any Sunni Muslim group, provided they have a sound financial status. They permit both types of cousin marriages. The occurrence of parallel cousin marriage is rare. Sororate occurs infrequently. Marriage by negotiation is the mode of acquiring a mate. Monogamy is the norm, but a few cases of nonsororal polygamy also exist. *Karumani* (black bead necklace) is the marriage symbol.

Maraikayar girls are married after they are 18 and boys after 22. Neither dowry nor bride-price is paid. The bridegroom promises *mehar* to the bride for future payment. It is the amount written in the marriage register kept with their *khazi* (priest). It is paid to the woman if her husband divorces her or if he dies. If a person dies without giving this *mehar* to his wife, she prays to the Almighty to pardon him. *Talak* (divorce) is allowed. Either spouse can initiate divorce by uttering '*Talak, Talak, Talak*' in front of people of the Maraikayar community.

Grounds for divorce are adultery, barrenness, impotence, cruelty and insanity. Children above 12 years stay with the father. Those below that age stay with their mother till they are 12, then join their father. A divorced couple, who wish to be united, cannot do so at once. He or she should marry someone else, get divorced again and then marry the former wife or husband. A woman who is divorced, or who has lost her husband, cannot marry again for 100 days from the date of the divorce or the death of her husband. This restriction is to determine whether she is pregnant or not. If she is pregnant, then she gets a maintenance allowance from the divorced husband — or from his family in the case of his death — till the birth of the child and the lactation period. Only then, she can remarry.

Both mixed extended and nuclear families exist among the Maraikayar. Both avoidance relationships and joking relationships are found. The father is head of the family. Succession is by the eldest son. Daughters also get a share in the family property, though less than that what a son gets.

There are restrictions on the movement of Maraikayar women outside their homes. In their homes they limit themselves to domestic work. In recent years, Maraikayar women are educated and work as teachers, doctors and clerks. In some places, uneducated women roll *beedis*. They participate in all family and social functions. Women also pray five times a day like men, but they do it at home.

The Maraikayar perform *valaikappu* in the husband's house during the seventh or ninth month of a woman's first pregnancy. Then, the pregnant woman is taken to her natal home for delivery. Post-delivery restrictions are observed. After delivery, the mother is not allowed to do *namaz* or touch the Koran during the pollution period. Birth pollution lasts for forty days. On the 41st day, both the mother and child are given purifactory baths. The child is named within ten days. Tonsuring is performed on the same day.

Sunnath, or circumcision, is an important ritual among the Maraikayar. An experienced barber in rural areas or a surgeon in urban areas conducts it on an auspicious day. A feast is served to all the relatives and friends who attend the function.

Puberty entails pollution for 11 days. The Maraikayar girl is prohibited from offering prayers during this period. She is served with egg and gingelly oil and other special food items. On the last day, she is given a purificatory bath and a feast is served.

Marriage *nikha*, is celebrated at the bride's residence. The *pesh imam* or *khazi* (priest) first finds out the bridegroom's willingness to marry the girl and then asks how much *mehar* he promises the bride. Then he approaches the girl and ascertains her willingness to marry the boy and tells her the promised *mehar* amount. If she agrees, she also signs in the marriage register. The bridegroom's sister ties a string of black beads around the bride's neck. The consummation ceremony takes place at the bridegroom's residence.

The Maraikayar bury their dead. The corpse is bathed, placed in a wooden coffin and carried first to the mosque and then to the burial ground. The priest offer prayers at home, at the mosque and at the burial ground. On the third day after death, they offer flowers, sweets, puffed rice and fruits to the dead at the grave and then distribute them to all. On the tenth, twentieth and thirtieth days, they prepare fried rice and mutton curry and serve this food to the poor and visiting friends and relatives. On the fortieth day, they make sweet rice and eighty rice roti. They give two rotis with some sweet rice to all the nearby houses in their locality. During the pollution period, they do not perform any auspicious functions. However, they offer prayers every day but do not touch the Koran.

Land is the main natural resource of the Maraikayar, and it is controlled by individual proprietorship. There are both landholders and landless people. The Maraikayar were once a militant people employed by the Portuguese king, the Zamorin, to fight the British in Kerala. But nowadays they are mainly cultivators and businessmen and are more prosperous than the Labbai.

The traditional caste panchayat, the *zamath*, exists. This has all the family elders as its members and a leader from among them. They deal with cases such as adultery, rape, disrespect for traditional norms and quarrels of any kind. The guilty are punished with fines and these go to the mosque fund.

The Maraikayar worship Allah. They have individual and family affiliation to *pirs* (saints) and visit their *dargahs* (tombs) and offer worship. The *dargah* at Nagore is famous. Their sacred specialists are from the Maraikayar or any Sunni Muslim community. They perform marriage, death and birth rites. Ramzan, Bakrid, Muharram, and Milad-ul-Nabi are some of the festivals they celebrate. In spite of their conversion to Islam, some of the pre-conversion practices, such as wearing a black bead necklace after marriage, marrying cross-cousins, celebration of pre-delivery rituals such as *valaikappu* and *palikappu*, still continue.

The Maraikayar treat all Muslims as equal and accept water and food from them. They also accept water and food from other Hindu communities who are equal to them in social status. They share wells with other communities. They have their own burial ground. They maintain symbiotic relationships, like receiving and rendering services. The community has businessmen, scholars, creative artists, white-collar job holders, teachers, administrators, engineers and doctors promoting modern intercommunity linkages.

The Maraikayar send their children to schools and colleges. They prefer modern medicare to the indigenous system of medicine and favour family planning. They have access to all civic amenities.

RAJALAKSHMI MISRA

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MARATHA

The Maratha are also called Maratha Kshatriya. The Maratha of Tamil Nadu are immigrants from Maharashtra. The etymology of the Maratha, though not exactly known, is interpreted as derived from *mar* and *hatana* meaning 'death' and 'withdraw', respectively. Considering that the Maratha never withdrew from the battle field till death or victory, this description might be attributed to them. The term Maratha also denotes a segment of the non-Brahman. Their titles are Rajah, Saheb and Rao for men and Saheba and Bai for women. However, the titles Rajah and Saheba are used only by 'royal' families.

The Maratha dynasty reigned in Thanjavur for a long period, flourishing between 1674 and 1855. The first Maratha ruler in Thanjavur was Rajah Venkoji, the second son of Rajah Shahaji. He captured the Thanjavur kingdom from the Nayak kings. The last Maratha king to rule Thanjavur was Rajah Sivaji who died in 1855. As Rajah Sivaji had no heir to succeed him, the Maratha dynasty became extinct.

In Tamil Nadu, the Maratha live mainly in Thanjavur, South Arcot and Tiruchchirappalli Districts. They speak Marathi at home and Tamil with others and use the Devanagari and Tamil scripts. In the past, the Maratha kings used the Modi script.

The Maratha have a distinct dress pattern. The men wear *jaga* (shirt) and *thoga* (trouser). The women wear *odni*, an upper garment, in addition to the *jaga, thoga* and a *padar* (veil) covering the head. The men also wear (turbans). Nowadays, however, most Marathas dress like local Tamilians. They wear their traditional dress only during rituals. They have several ornaments — *nath* for the nose, *topanbali* for the ear and *kantasar* for the neck are some. They have a *bagava* (ochre)-coloured flag with different emblems in it.

The Maratha are nonvegetarian, but abstain from eating pork and beef. Rice is their staple food. They eat all varieties of pulses, vegetables, roots, tubers and fruits. They use groundnut oil for cooking. They consume coffee and tea. Men drink liquor occasionally. They consume milk and milk products. They chew betel and some of them smoke *beedis* or cigarettes. Some use snuff too.

The social divisions in the Maratha community are *gotras* such as Bharadwaja, Vishwamitra and Koushika. The function of these exogamous *gotras* is to indicate descent and regulate marriage alliances. They are aware of the *varna* system and consider themselves Kshatriyas.

Marriages with paternal and maternal cross-cousins and nieces are preferred by the Maratha. The age at marriage is around 25 for boys, and between 20 and 22 for girls. Marriages are arranged by the elders through negotiation. The consent of the boy and girl is taken before fixing the alliance. At present monogamy is the norm, though the Maratha kings practised polygyny. A woman's marriage symbols are the *garsoli* or *thali* and *jodavi* (toe-rings). Dowry is given in both cash and kind. They follow the patrilocal rule of residence after marriage. Divorce is not permitted in the community. Widower remarriages are allowed.

There are both nuclear and extended families in the Maratha community. A joking relationship is permitted among brothers-in-law, and between grandparents and grandchildren. They follow the Hindu law of inheritance. All sons get equal shares in the ancestral property. The eldest son succeeds as head of the family.

Maratha women have a low status when compared to their men. Women play a role in religious rituals and social functions. Some of them, who are employed, contribute to the family income. They control family expenditure.

The Maratha observe pre-delivery rituals for a woman who is pregnant for the first time. During the third month, they conduct *chorvonti* at her in-laws' home. In this ritual, the pregnant woman worships the family deity, then receives from the elders *vonti* (rice, wheat, two coconuts, two bananas, turmeric, vermilion, dried dates, betel leaves and arecanuts, all tied in a cloth). *Panchavi vonti* is observed during the fifth month of pregnancy. New clothes are also given to her on that day. During the eighth month, they conduct a ceremony called *alongla* or *seemantham.* The pregnant woman is dressed in green-coloured garments and her hair is adorned with green herbs. She is presented bangles made of different metals, such as gold, silver, bronze and green-coloured glass. The women-folk also have a separate feast called *pagat.*

The first delivery of a Maratha woman takes place in her natal home. On the fifth day after the delivery, they worship deities such as Renukabai and Sattubai. The worship is conducted by an elderly *sumangali* (an elderly married woman who is not a widow) of the family. Post-delivery pollution lasts for ten days. On the 11th day, a purificatory ceremony is conducted. After two or three months, the *palana* (cradle) ceremony is conducted. The first feeding of cereals' ceremony is usually observed when the child is six months' old and the tonsuring ceremony when the child is one. Children are named after their ancestors or family deities. Generally, the name by which the maternal aunt calls the child at the time of the cradle ceremony is agreed to.

The Maratha observe the *furkar muhurta* (petticoat ceremony) for girls when a girl is five or six. After worshipping the family deity, the girl is given a *furkar*, which she then wears. Relatives present *furkars*, blouses and other articles to her. On attaining puberty, the *sumangalis* bathe, dress and adorn the girl with jewels. Then she is kept in seclusion for five days. On the fifth day, she is given a bath and allowed to mingle with other members of the family, but not to participate in puja till the purificatory ceremony on the seventh day.

The Maratha conduct *munjal* (sacred thread-wearing) ceremony during a boy's 11th year. On this occasion, the boy is made to wear the traditional dress and a headgear (*munda*). Holding a *thalvar* (sword), he goes in a procession astride a decorated horse to a nearby temple to worship. On returning home, he salutes his elders and gets blessed.

Marriage alliances are arranged by the Maratha elders through negotiation. The *sakarpura* (betrothal ceremony) is held at the bride's residence. *Yadi*, a marriage agreement, is prepared and signed by the bridegroom, bride and six witnesses. Then, *yadi* (betel leaves, arecanuts and coconut) are exchanged by both parties. The wedding is conducted at the bride's residence or at a *kalyana mandapam*. The Maratha bridegroom, on arrival at the venue, is greeted by the *vyali* (close relatives) and the father-in-law performs *seemantha* puja, which includes washing the bridegroom's feet and garlanding him. During the rituals, it is customary for the maternal uncles of both the bride and

the bridegroom to be present in the marriage hall with drawn swords in their hands. Meanwhile, the bride performs Gowrihara puja. The wedding ceremony culminates with the bridegroom tying the *garsoli* (*thali*) around the neck of the bride. The feast is arranged by the bride's parents. The consummation ceremony is on the same day at the bridegroom's residence.

Among the Maratha, a corpse is dressed well and adorned with jewels. The body is placed in a sitting position, with the right hand in a saluting position in the case of males, and carried on a bier to the cremation ground. A palanquin decorated with ivory was used by the royal families. The jewels, turban and sword are removed before the cremation. The funeral rites are performed by the eldest son. Death pollution lasts for 11 days. On the second day, they collect the bones and ashes in small copper vessels to be taken to places like Tiruvarur, Varanasi and Rameswaram for immersion in the river or sea. On the 12th day, they observe *subha-sweekarana,* during which the chief mourner and relatives go to a river and bathe. Holy water is sprinkled in and around the house by the priest to mark the end of pollution. They observe annual death rites, called *sradha.* They make *tanks* (an embossed effigy) of their ancestors with gold and silver and keep them in the *devghar* (worship room) along with the idols of deities.

Land is the main natural resource of the Maratha and it is controlled by individual proprietors. Traditionally, they are warriors and rulers as well as agriculturists. Their present occupations include agriculture, government service and business. They maintain links with the market directly as well as through middlemen.

There is no traditional caste council among the Maratha. A modern caste association exists, to work for the general welfare of the community.

The Maratha are Hindus. They worship Khanderao, Mahishasuramardini, Marthandamallarai, Maruthi and Sankar as family deities. They also worship local village deities. Their major pilgrim centres are Pandharpur, Jejuri, Tulzapur (all in Maharashtra), Srirangam, Varanasi and Rameswaram. They observe all Hindu festivals, such as Pongal, Deepavali, Dussehra,

Varalakshmi Puja and Vaikunta Ekadasi. They employ Brahmans as sacred specialists to perform birth, marriage and death rites.

The Maratha are proficient in drawing and painting. They have oral tradition. Folk-songs are sung, especially by women, during rituals. They use string musical instruments. Some of them play the *veena*. The Maratha kings were patrons of Carnatic music and *Bharatha Natyam*.

The Maratha accept water and food from all higher communities. They exchange food and water with communities such as the Vellalar and Gounder. They share water sources with other communities. They visit the same religious shrines, and participate in traditional festivals and festivities. Patron-client, landlord-tenant and cultivator-labour relationships exist with other communities. There are businessmen, scholars, creative artists, white-collar job-holders, teachers, engineers and doctors in the community.

The attitude of the Maratha is favourable towards formal education, modern medicare and family planning. They have access to all civic amenities.

D. XAVIOUR

MARATHA BRAHMAN

The Maratha Brahman is a Marathi-speaking Brahman community. They are also referred to as Rayar Brahman and Dessastha Brahman. They use family titles such as Row, Rao, Kesikar, Joshi, Panth, Bhatt, Kulkarni, Punatambekar, Goswamy and Goswamygal. They have migrated from Maharashtra after the invasion of Mysore in 1676 and spread in present-day Karnataka and Tamil Nadu. Thanjavur and its neighbourhood, South Arcot, North Arcot Ambedkar, Pudukkottai, Tirunelveli, Madurai, Salem and Madras city have the largest aggregate of Maratha settlers. Thanjavur has been happily styled by the Maharaja of Travancore as "the Southern Home, far off from their distant home, and the springing up of common ties, they were all welded together under the common name of Desastha" (Bhonsle 1937). The community has both Vaishnavites and Saivites.

The Maratha Brahman wear the sectarian marks. The Vaishnavites wear the *tulasi mala* and the *gopi chandan bottu* (sandal paste *bottu*) on the forehead, while Saivites apply *vibhuti bottu* (sacred ash) on their foreheads and wear the *rudhraksha mala*. Old women still dress in Marathi style.

The Maratha Brahman are pure vegetarian. Their staple foods are rice and wheat. They consume all local varieties of pulses, vegetables, roots and tubers. They use groundnut oil for cooking. Sweets are prepared with ghee. They do not drink liquor. Milk and milk products are frequently consumed. They drink coffee and tea. They chew betel and use snuff.

The Maratha Brahman have a number of *gotras* derived from the *rishi* (sages) and *pravara*. The Vishwamitra, Ahamarusha and Koushika are grouped together and known as *trayer rishi pravara* (three sages pravara). They have family names (surnames) such as Kesikar, Panth, Varkid, Pingle, Goswamy, Gajanara, Koulagi, Pandurangi, Sheerasagara and Kavlekar. They are further divided into two groups for ceremonial purposes, *i.e.* one follows the *Asvalayana sutram* and the other the *Apastamba*. Every family in the community belongs to one of two groups, namely Yajur vedis or Rig vedis. Again, the community is divided into Saivites and Vaishnavites. The *pravara*

and *gotras* regulate marriage alliances and indicate descent. The family name focuses on the paternal lineage and progeny. Most of them do not use their family names. In some cases, the Maratha family names were altered. For example, Goswamy became Goswamygal; Panth became Panthgal. The *gal* is a Tamil suffix denoting respect. They are Brahman in the *varna* system and have a high social status at the regional level.

The Maratha Brahman family is either vertically extended or nuclear. They observe both avoidance and joking relationships. A daughter-in-law avoids appearing before her father-in-law, while a son-in-law avoids his mother-in-law as a mark of respect. Jokes are exchanged amongst brothers-in-law as well as between sisters-in-law. All sons inherit equal shares of the parental property, but the eldest son succeeds his father as head of the family. Daughters also get some share of the parental property nowadays and this is paid at the time of marriage in the form of dowry.

Maratha Brahman women observe a variety of *vratas* (fasts), such as Mangalagowri, Kedaragowri, Harita Lakshmi *ekadesi*, Varalakshmi, Nagachaturthi, Sampasasti and Seeralsasti. Most women are confined to household duties. They participate in social functions and religious rituals. A few educated women are employed, contribute to the family income and control the family expenditure. Suggesstions from women are taken in decision-making. The women feel that the *haleda-kunku* (turmeric and vermilion) received from their natal home is the most desirable gift. Daughters get a share of their mothers' ornaments.

The Maratha Brahman observe *pumsavana* and *seemantham* (pre-delivery ritual) during the eighth month of pregnancy at the husband's house. The maternal relatives of the pregnant woman celebrate the function. An *achary* (priest) officiates at the rituals. New clothes and bangles are given to the pregnant woman. These rituals are observed only for the first pregnancy. She goes to her natal home for parturition. Post-delivery *vrudhi* (pollution) is observed for 11 days. On the 11th day, a ceremonial bath is given to both the mother and the child to remove pollution. On the same day, they perform *jatakakarma* (writing the horoscope for the child), and *namakarana* (nam-

ing). At the time of naming, the child is placed in a swing. *Punyavachanam* is performed to eliminate birth pollution. The *javala* (tonsuring ceremony) is performed along with *kanutanchana* (ear boring ceremony) and *annaprasana,* at their *kula deivam's* (family deity) temple, *i.e.* Tirupati or Mariamma temple, during the 11th month. All the three rituals used to be observed on the same day. Now, the ear-boring is not done for male children and *annaprasana* is observed during the fifth month. They conduct *choulam* (tonsuring) for boys during the fifth year, at the time of *vidyabhyasam, i.e.* on Vijayadasami day. *Upanayanam* (thread-wearing ceremony) is conducted for boys at the age of seven, nine, eleven or thirteen, whichever is convenient. Nowadays, most observe *upanayanam* just before marriage. They observe *thorairal* (puberty ceremony) for girls. Puberty pollution is observed for three days. The girl bathes ceremonially on the fourth day and on that same evening puberty ceremony is observed in which her maternal uncle gives her new clothes.

The Maratha Brahman follow community endogamy and *gotra* and *pravara* exogamy. They prefer consanguineous marriages, between cross-cousins as well as maternal uncle and niece. Child marriages were prevalent in the past. Nowadays, boys and girls get married after 21 and 18 respectively. Marital alliances are fixed by negotiation. Monogamy is the norm. Polygyny is allowed if the first wife is sterile or unfit for marital life. Marriage symbols are the *thali, nathini* (nose-stud in left nostril), and *metti* for women. *Varapuja* (dowry) is paid in both cash and kind. According to tradition, a one rupee coin, along with a silk cloth, is paid as *varapuja.* They follow the patrilocal rule of residence. Dissolution of marriage and widow remarriage are not allowed by tradition. Only widower remarriages and sororate are allowed. Nowadays, the community endogamy rule has been slightly relaxed and alliances with local Tamil Brahmans are permitted. Most married women do not customarily wear *besari.* They conduct marriage rituals according to the Hindu *saptapadhi* system. *Kanyadanam* is an important ritual in their marriage. The *mangallutakam puja* is an unique puja observed in their marriage rituals and is not followed by Tamil Brahmans. *Visesha muhurtham* (consummation ceremony) takes

place at the bride's residence. The wedding feast is given by the bride's parents. In the past, weddings lasted five days. On the first day, they conducted *nichayathartham* (betrothal), on the following day *mappilai azhaippu* (inviting the bridegroom) and *varapuja*, on the third day *kasiyatra* (mock pilgrimage), on the fourth day *mangalasutradharana* (tying of *thali*) and *kanyadanam* and on the fifth day *sade* (giving gifts to the couple by the bride's parents). Nowadays, all these rituals are completed within two days.

The Maratha Brahman cremate their dead and observe ten days of death pollution. The chief mourner observes 12 days of pollution. On the day following the cremation, *asthi sanchyanam* (disposing of bones and ashes) is performed. The *asthi* are disposed of in sacred rivers. The eldest and youngest sons are the chief mourners for the father and mother respectively. All the sons of the deceased tonsure their heads. *Karumathi* (death feast) is arranged on the tenth day, and on the 13th day *sradha* (final death rites) is performed. After that *punyavachanam* (purificatory ceremony) is done, *thithi* (annual ceremony) is performed for the deceased. They observe almost all the rituals in *Vaidika Samskaram* and as prescribed in the scriptures.

Land is the main natural resource of the Maratha Brahman. Some of them are landlords and have leased their lands to communities such as the Vellalar and the Naicker. At present, most of them are landless. Traditionally, they were ministers, pandits, poets and priests of the Maratha kings. Later, a few took up cultivation as their primary occupation. Now they have taken up a variety of occupations. Some of them work in banks, business establishments, or in government or private organisations. A few have started trade and self-employment.

The Maratha Brahman have no traditional caste councils. They have the Maharashtra Samaj to work for the welfare of the Maratha population. The Maharashtra Samaj helps the poor and meritorious students of the community in their higher education.

The Maratha Brahman worship their *kuladeivam* (family deities): Martanda Mallara, Tulza Bhavani and Tirupati Venkatachalapathi. The Vaishnavites of the community are

Madhwas and follow the *dwaitam* philosophy of Sri Raghavendra. The Saivites of the community follow Adi Sankaracharya. Their sacred specialists are the *acharys* from the same community. They celebrate all Hindu festivals.

They have an oral tradition. The women sing folk-songs like *phalanana* (cradle songs) and *manglastakam* (marriage songs). They use musical instruments like the *mridangam, veena, tambur,* violin and *swarabhat* during religious functions. They sing a variety of devotional songs also.

The Maratha Brahman accept water and food from all the local Brahman communities, but not from others. They share water sources with others. They share cremation grounds with other Brahmans. The service castes such as the Vannan, Ambattan, and artisan communities such as the goldsmith render services to the Maratha Brahman during rituals. Some of them maintain a landlord-tenant relationship with other castes. The community has entreprenuers, businessmen, scholars, creative artists, white-collar job-holders, teachers, engineers, doctors, and defence personnel.

Most Maratha Brahman study upto college level. Students drop out mainly due to economic problems. They favour both traditional and modern medicare as well as family planning. Couples prefer one or two children. They have access to all civic amenities.

V.S. Deep Kumar

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MARAVAR

The Maravar are an important martial community in Tamil Nadu. They are distributed in the Kanniyakumari, Tirunelveli, Chidambaranar, Kamarajar, Ramanathapuram, P.M. Thevar, Madurai and Pudukkottai Districts. Tamil is their mother tongue. The Maravar use the surname Thevar. H.A. Stuart (1891) writes, "There exists among them a picturesque tradition to the effect that, in consequence of their assisting Rama in his war against the demon Ravana, the deity gratefully exclaimed in good Tamil, '*Maraven*', or 'I will never forget', and that they have ever since been called Maravans. But with more probability the name may be connected with the word *maram,* which means killing, ferocity, bravery and the like as pointing clearly to their unpleasant profession, that of robbing and slaying their neighbours". According to an another legend, this word is supposed to be derived from, *maravu* meaning 'secret', since they were born of the secret intercourse of Indra with Ahalya. They have a history of their own, which narrates they were the warriors of the Pandya kings and beame the poligars of various territories in later history. The *zamindars* of Uttumalai, Singampatti, Oorkadu, Surandai, Sattur, Sivagiri, Maniyacci, Kadambur and Avadipuram were from this community. The Ramanathapuram ruler is the chief of the Maravar.

The Maravar were described as 'burglars and robbers' in Triunelveli District (Mullaly, 1892). The 1891 Census reported that "the Maravans formed only ten per cent of the population of Tirunelveli, yet, they had committed seventy per cent of the dacoities which had occured in the previous five years" (Francis, 1901). So they were declared as a denotified community with a right to be *kavalkarar* (watchmen) during British rule. They are now listed under the Most Backward Class.

The Maravar were also placed higher, as one of the caste clusters of the Mukkulathor ('three castes'), the other two being Kallar and Agamudaiyar. The Maravar can marry an Agamudaiyar girl and the sons born of such marriages should marry Agamudaiyar girls, while the girls should marry Maravar boys (Ramaswami, 1972). The Maravar are further divided into

various groups, and each group is further divided into *kilai* (clan) and *kottu* (totem). The various groups of the Maravar community have been studied separately. Marriages are arranged within the groups. Except the Kondaiyam-kottai Maravar who marry only the mother's brother's daughter and father's sister's daughter, all other groups marry sister's daughters also. The marriage rule is so strict that if a boy's father's sister has a daughter, he has to marry only her and if he wants to marry some other girl, his *attai* (father's sister), has to give her consent for the match at the time of the marriage. The rule of residence after marriage is patrilocal. The Maravar are matrilineal and the children belong to the mother's clan but the community seems to be in the process of transition to patriliny. Though divorce and widow remarriages are accepted, they are generally discouraged.

The Maravar are agriculturalists or agriculural labourers. But they are now educating their children and many of them are in white-collar jobs of various kinds. Political leadership has emerged from the local level to the state level. Their caste associations, like the Mukkulathor Sangam and Thevar Peravai, look into matters pertaining to community welfare.

S. Manoharan

Ambaneri Maravar

The Ambaneri Maravar are also called Ambanattu or Ambanadar Maravar, they are one of the many groups of the Maravar and are distributed in 18 villages within an area circumscribed by Sivakasi and Tenkasi on one side and the Western Ghat's and Sankaranayinar Kovil on the other in the Tirunelveli and Kamarajar Districts. They are also distributed in about 18 or 20 villages in the Madurai District. The Ambaneri Maravar are believed to have been so called because they migrated from Ambanadu 800 to 900 years ago. Ambanadu is in Mudukulathur taluk of Ramanathapuram District lies fifty miles east of Madurai. After leaving it, they settled in their present habitat, especially

especially in and around Uttumalai, which is said to have been ruled by them before they were replaced by the Kondaiyam Kottai Maravar. They believe themselves to be the descendants of the Pandyan rulers. They are mentioned as a distinct subgroup of the Maravar in *Maravar Charitram* (Kulandaivelu Swamy, 1938). They speak Tamil, and use the Tamil script.

The Ambaneri Maravar are nonvegetarian, but do not eat pork or beef. Rice, millets and *ragi* are their staple foods. They also consume pulses and vegetables. Their men drink toddy and other alcoholic drinks. They consume milk and milk products moderately. Betel leaves and arecanuts are chewed. Cigarettes, *beedis*, and country cheroots are smoked by the men. They also use snuff.

The Ambaneri Maravar are divided into matrilineal descent groups called *kottu kilai* or simply *kilai*. They are said to be 12 of them, but according to some there are eight *kottus*, each of which is divided into two *kilais* (there are 16 *kilais* in total). Though it is reported that they are divided into 12 or more descent groups, only eight of them could be named: Karunkulam, Sennel, Vatti, Maladu, Kadai, Usuppu, Manavada and Chella. The socially conscious and educated among them place themselves as Kshatriyas in the *varna* system. But most of them are unaware of the *varna* classification. The Ambaneri Maravar usually marry among themselves, but during last two decades inter-subgroup marriage between the different Maravar groups and even with the other Mukkulathor groups, such as the Kallar and the Agamudaiyar, has come to be accepted. However, this trend is largely restricted to the elite sections. In most villages, the different descent groups are exogamous, but in some villages they are reported to have been marrying within the same *kilai*. Even the descent group exogamy, as is practised, presents a complicated system of preferential alliances which are not similarly followed in all the places. In some places, it is reported that the people from the Karunkulam and Kadai groups cannot intermarry, but a Vatti group member can marry into any of the other groups. In some villages it is reported that a Usuppu *kilai* member cannot marry with the Sennel, Manavada and Chella groups. Their boys are married after they are 20, and the girls between 18 and 20.

Both patrilateral and matrilateral cross-cousins are allowed to marry. Indeed, cross-cousin marriage is preferred. Mates are acquired through negotiation if there is no insistence on marrying a cross-cousin. Monogamy is the norm, but polygynous alliances are also encountered. Levirate and sororate are permitted. Marriage symbols for women are the *thali* and *minji*. Bride-price is only nominal, being Rs. 100, whereas dowry payments depend on the socioeconomic conditions of the families involved. The residence after marriage is patrilocal. Divorce is permitted and, sometimes, compensation is paid, depending on the situation. After divorce, children are looked after by either parent, as is normally agreed upon. Divorcees, widows and widowers are allowed to remarry. Male equigeniture is the norm, but daughters are given a share in the form of dowry. Succession is by the male line.

Ambaneri Maravar women engage in household as well as wage-earning activities, both in agricultural and non-agricultural operations. Thus, they contribute to family income and take part in family management. They participate in religious activities and life-cycle rituals. But they have no role to play in the management of community affairs.

During an Ambaneri Maravar woman's first pregnancy, either in the seventh or ninth month, the pre-delivery ritual *valaikappu* is observed, before the woman is taken for confinement to her natal home. Expenses for this ritual are borne by the woman's parents. The child is bathed on the day of the delivery, whereas the mother is bathed on the second or third day. A drop of honey or sugar water is (*senai*) put into the mouth of the child before it is suckled. After the 16th day ceremony, birth pollution ceases. The child is named on the 16th day. Ear-boring and tonsuring ceremonies are performed, after three months, in a nearby temple.

In the past, a separate hut used to be erected in which to seclude the Ambaneri Maravar girl who had attained menarche, but this practice has largely been abandoned, at least in urban areas. A betrothal ceremony precedes the solemnisation of marriage. On an appointed day, as fixed by a *josiyar* (astrologer) or Brahman, *nichayathamboolam* takes place. The two families exchange gifts, fix the date of the marriage

and the customary *parisam* amount is handed over before a feast is served. Marriage is usually a simple affair and is solemnised in the bride's residence by an Iyer (Brahman). The *thali* is tied around the bride's neck, the first knot by the bridegroom and the other two by his sister. On the day following the marriage, the consummation ceremony takes place at the bride's house.

When death occurs among the Ambaneri Maravar, the body is washed before it is placed in a convenient place to enable people to come and pay their last respects. Before the body is taken for burial or cremation, the body is again washed, with water specifically brought for the purpose by the sons and relatives and wrapped in new clothes. Usually the eldest son acts as the chief mourner. He, along with the other sons, is tonsured before the burial or cremation. The firstborn are usually cremated, but others are buried. The body is cremated in a south-north direction and the pyre is lit near the head by the chief mourner, after he makes three rounds and performs the *kolli* (last rites). The ashes, in the case of cremation, are immersed in a waterway. Funeral rites, *karumathi*, are performed on the 16th day, when a Brahman conducts the proceedings, for which he is paid in kind. From death to *karumathi*, persons from different communities, such as the Ambattan, the Pallan, the Parayan, the Chakkiliyan and the Brahman offer certain specific services which are customary.

Most Ambaneri Maravar depend on agriculture. A few are employed in government service or other occupations such as trade and business. Most of them are landowners. The Ambaneri Maravar once owned large tracts of *zamindari* land. But after the abolition of *zamindari* and subsequent implementation of land reforms, most of their holdings have been reduced. Because of this, many of them depend on agricultural jobs. Women and children have also taken to labour.

Each Ambaneri Maravar village has a hereditary *nattanmai* (headman), who oversees the community interests, resolves petty disputes. *Nattanmais* are also responsible for organising temple festivities. If the issue involves the community in general, all the *nattanmais* meet in a place near Solacheri to decide upon the matter. Some of the Ambaneri Maravar are affiliated

to larger caste associations, such as the Thevar Peravai or Mukkulathor Sangam.

The Ambaneri Maravar, except for a few Christian converts, are Hindus. Every family, in its patrilineal extension, has a *kuladeivam* or *kulathambiran* who is worshipped on every important occasion. And every year, on an appointed day, they celebrate the *kuladeivam* festival. Ayyanar, Murugan, Pillaiyar, Mariamma are a few of their other deities. Karthigai, Adi, Pongal and Deepavali are some of the important festivals celebrated. Surandai, Sankaranayinar Kovil and Tiruchendur are some of their sacred centres. Folk-tales and folk-songs specific to the community are being kept alive. Jallikattu (bull fighting) has been perfected to an art by the Ambaneri Maravar and some other Maravar groups.

The Ambaneri Maravar consider themselves to be equal in all respects with the other Maravar groups. The Brahman and the Vellalar are considered superior to them. However, food and water are sometimes exchanged with the Vellalar, the Kallar, the Agamudaiyar and the Nadar while the Pallan and the Chakkiliyan accept food and water from them.

The Ambaneri Maravar favour formal education. Allopathic medicare and the family welfare programme have been adopted by them. However, a few of them still opt for indigenous medicare. In some of their villages drinking water is scarce. All their villages are electrified but a few of them cannot afford to electrify their houses.

P. ADITI (MUKHERJEE)

Anil Kottai Maravar

The Anil Kottai Maravar are also known as the Anil Eera Kottai Maravar. They say that because of their swiftness (*anil* in Tamil means squirrel, known to climb swiftly) they have come to be called so. It appears that Anil Eera Kottai means 'a fort which cannot be climbed by even a swift squirrel'. By implication this means the Maravar associate themselves with a fort with unusually high walls. The Kiluvainadu, mentioned as the Maravar's homeland, has a specified division for the Anil Kottai

Maravar. That is to say, this group of Maravar have a longstanding origin. In general, they are also called Maravar or Thevar. It is believed that they migrated from Ayir Vinji Nadu to their present habitat in Ambasamudram about eight generations ago. Later, they spread out and settled in 18 villages around Uttumalai and Sendamadam in the Tirunelveli District. Attanallur village, near Ambasamudram, is considered their main village. They also state that they are settled in two villages in the Bodinayakkanur area of Madurai District. They speak Tamil among themselves and with others and use the Tamil script.

The Anil Kottai Maravar are nonvegetarian, but do not eat pork or beef. Millets, *ragi* and rice are their staple foods. They also eat seasonal vegetables, and pulses. Groundnut oil is used for cooking. Milk consumption is moderate and milk products are consumed. Men drink liquor. Cigarettes and *beedis* are smoked. They chew betel leaves with arecanut and lime. Snuff is also used.

The Anil Kottai Maravar do not have any endogamous or exogamous groups. Dumont (1963), based on certain features, pointed to the existence of four patrilineal groups in the Mela Kilangal village. But no such groups could be recorded in other areas. In every area, the *chokkarar* and *sambandakarar*, the kin and affines respectively, can be differentiated. They consider themselves different from other Maravar subgroups. A majority of them consider themselves to be Sudras in the *varna* system, but some consider themselves to be Kshatriyas. Some Anil Kottai Maravar place themselves next to the Sembinattu Maravar and consider other Maravar subgroups as lower than them.

Traditionally, community endogamy is the norm among the Anil Kottai Maravar. This has been relaxed for some time now to encourage intermarriages with other Maravar subgroups and the Mukkulathor community. Every family can identify or locate the *sambandakarar* with whom they can enter into a marital alliance. Besides, alliances with the father's sister's daughter or mother's brother's daughter are preferred. Contrary to the practice of many other Maravar subgroups, the Anil Kottai Maravar allow uncle-niece marriage. If no preferential relative is available for marriage, mates are acquired through nego-

tiation. Monogamy is the norm, but polygyny is allowed, to beget children or the much-wanted male child, but these instances are rare. Boys are married after they are 22 and girls after 18. Sororate is permitted. Both bride-price (*parisam*), and dowry are paid. Toe-rings and *thali* are the symbols of married women. After marriage, the residence is patrilocal. Divorce is permitted. Widow remarriage is allowed, but only rarely. A divorcee or a widower, however, can remarry.

Most Anil Kottai Maravar live in joint families. Parents-in-law and elder brother-in-law are avoidance relatives. Joking relations exist with cross-cousins, wife's younger siblings and the classificatory cross-cousins. Inheritance is by male equigeniture and the eldest son succeeds his father.

Anil Kottai Maravar women engage in economic activities either within the home or outside it. They also participate in ritual and religious activities on an equal footing. They have a role in family management and their consent is sought while taking family decisions. However, on the whole, the women have a secondary status in relation to the men.

In the seventh or ninth month of her first pregnancy, an Anil Kottai Maravar woman's female relations, from her natal home, bring 11 or 15 measures of rice, jaggery, vegetables and common food items in order to perform *valaikappu*, a pre-delivery ritual. On this occasion, the pregnant woman is given glass bangles to wear. After the ritual, she is taken to her natal home for the confinement. The child is bathed upon birth and if it is male, the paternal grandmother distributes sugar and plantains to all relatives. The mother is given a bath on the third day. On the 19th or 40th day the paternal grandparents name the child, after consulting a *josiyar* (astrologer). After the 40th day, the mother is allowed to visit a temple, but she continues to stay in her natal home for about six months. When it is one, the child is tonsured and its earlobes pierced.

On menarche, an Anil Kottai Maravar girl is secluded for at least five days. During this time, she is fed nutritious food. On the 16th day or afterwards, the maternal uncle gives her gifts and bears the expenses of the *sadangu*. Betrothal (*nichayathartham*) precedes marriage and the ceremony is very important, for the alliance is formalised on that day, after gifts,

such as a sari, vermilion and ornaments, are given to the bride by the father of the boy, along with the token *parisam* amount. The marriage date is also fixed on this day. Marriages are solemnised in the bride's house. In the past, if the occasion demanded, arecanuts used to be carried to the bride's house by the bridegroom's sister, who used to tie the *thali* and bring back the bride to live with the bridegroom. There was no further ceremony. This is no longer the practice. However, even now, if the marriage expenses are unaffordable, once the *nichayathartham* is over, the man and woman may live together as a married couple without any formal ceremonies. This is socially accepted. A formal ceremony is held when it is financially possible, sometimes even after children are born. If one of the marriage partners dies before the formal ceremony, a mock marriage ritual is performed before the body is taken for burial.

In the past, marriages used to be solemnised during the night, but nowadays they are performed during the day. A Brahman conducts the marriage proceedings. The tying of the *thali* is the most important marriage ritual. The first knot is tied by the bridegroom and the other two by his sister. The marriage is consummated on the very day of the marriage. The bridegroom stays with his wife in his in-laws' home for about three months after the marriage, during which period he is feasted almost every day. After three months, on an auspicious day, the couple go to live in the husband's home. At least three times in the next one year, during the festivals of Adi, Pongal and Deepavali, the couple are invited by the parents of the girl.

When a death occurs among the Anil Kottai Maravar, the dead body is bathed at least twice, the second time with water specifically brought for the purpose by relatives led by the chief mourner. The death news is carried to relatives by a man from the Chakkiliyan community. All firstborn are cremated, the others are buried. The body is carried to the burial ground in a sitting posture, contrary to the practice of the other Maravar groups. On the 16th day, the mortal remains are taken, usually to Courtallam, for immersion, but some take them to Varanasi. On the 16th day, the house is purified and

old vessels are replaced by new ones. In the case of the death of a married man, the *thali* of his wife is removed on the 16th day. The final death ritual, *karumathi*, is performed on the 17th day by a Brahman. The deceased is offered *shradh* on the first anniversary and, if it can be afforded, on subsequent anniversaries too.

A majority of the Anil Kottai Maravar are landowning agriculturists. But owing to drought and low rainfall in their area, they get little produce from their land. This makes them seasonally migrate to other areas in search of labour, especially agricultural labour. Their women work at *beedi*-making at home. Of late, many have opted for non-agricultural labour and services. Some of them have entered government and other services.

There is no formal community panchayat for the Anil Kottai Maravar. Their disputes are arbitrated by community elders. Though every Anil Kottai Maravar village has a hereditary *nattanmai*, his influence and power have long been eroded. These days, his main function is to arrange community festivals along with the other *nattanmais*.

The Anil Kottai Maravar are Hindus. Gajendra Varuda Perumal is their patron deity. Family deities such as Ayyanar, Periya Perumal, Periya Naicken, Padagarachiamman and regional deities such as Murugan, Pillaiyar and Siva are worshipped. Panguni Uttaram, Adi, Thaipusam are some of the local festivals they observe. They also celebrate Deepavali and Pongal.

The Anil Kottai Maravar have commensal relations with the other Maravar groups. Of late, connubial relations are also being maintained. They accept food and water from the Nadar, Achari and such communities. Patron-client relationships exist in all their villages — these relations are restricted to the servicing castes and the Scheduled Castes who work either as tenants or labourers.

The Anil Kottai Maravar favour formal education. Modern medicare is preferred to indigenous medicine. The women have adopted family planning methods.

P.B.S.V PADMANABHAM

Anjukottu Maravar

The Anjukottu Maravar are also known as Anjumuhattu Maravar, meaning the Maravar who wear a five faced or five cone *thali* (marriage badge). It is said that the five cones or faces of the *thali* also refer to the five faces of Lord Siva. To the non-Maravar, they are known only as Maravar, but to other Maravar, they are a subcaste of Maravar distinct from other subgroups. Their original village is said to be Anjukottai, now in the R.S. Mangalam taluk where their community leader resides. As with other Maravar subgroups, they suffix Thevar to their personal names, in addition to Ambalam. The Anjukottu Maravar are largely distributed in 250 or so villages in and around R.S. Mangalam, Tiruvadanai and other places in the Ramanathapuram and Pasumpon Muthuramalinga Thevar Districts. They speak Tamil and use the Tamil script. The five-coned *thali* worn by their married women is a distinctive identification of the Anjukottu Maravar.

The Anjukottu Maravar are nonvegetarian, but do not eat beef or pork. Rice is their staple food. They also eat pulses, and seasonal and leafy vegetables. Milk and milk products are occasionally consumed. Men drink liquor. The men smoke cigarettes and *beedis*. Arecanut and betel leaves are chewed by both sexes. Men also use snuff.

The Anjukottu Maravar are a numerically small and, to some extent, isolated Maravar subcaste. Earlier, there was no intermarriage between the Anjukottu and other Maravar sub-groups. Even now, intersubcaste marriages are not frequent. They are divided into seven or nine, matrilineal descent groups called *kilai*. These *kilais* are not hierarchially ranked. The children inherit the mother's *kilai*. The main function of these *kilais* is to regulate marriages. Some Anjukottu Maravar perceive themselves as Kshatriya; but this is a recent phènomenon.

The Anjukottu Maravar do not marry within the same *kilai*. Consanguineous marriages to mother's brother's or father's sister's daughters are preferred, but not uncle-niece marriage. Exchange marriages are common. Usually boys marry when they are around 22 years and girls after 18. Monogamy is the

norm, but polygyny or sororal polygyny, usually to beget a son or children, is allowed. Levirate and sororate are permitted if they are of the junior type. Symbols of marriage for a woman are the *thali* and *minji*. Dowry is paid, usually in cash or in kind. A token bride-price is also paid. Residence, after marriage, is patrilocal. Divorce is permitted. If the husband initiates divorce, he pays a heavier compensation than if the wife does. Widows and widowers are allowed to remarry.

A majority of the Anjukottu Maravar live in joint families. Nuclear families are generally an urban phenomenon. The eldest son gets a bigger share of the parental property than the other children. A woman inherits her mother's property. Succession is in the male line. Avoidance relations exist with parents-in-law. Cross-cousins have a joking relationship.

Anjukottu Maravar women are usually engaged in household chores. Only women from a few families are engaged in the outside economic activities, especially agricultural labour, to supplement the family income.

During the seventh or ninth month of an Anjukottu Maravar woman's first pregnancy, the *valaikappu* ritual is performed. Four or five kinds of rice preparations are given to the pregnant woman along with sweets and *pongal* (a sweet dish). The woman is also given bangles to wear. After the delivery, the child is given a bath. The mother is given a bath on the seventh day. On the third or fifth day, a drop of donkey's milk is put in the mouth of the child. On the seventh day, the mother is customarily fed chicken soup. Birth pollution ends with the 17th day ritual, and on that day, the child is named. Either within the first year or before it is four, the child is tonsured and its earlobes pierced. These rituals are performed at the *kuladeivam's* temple for the first child. The maternal uncle and paternal aunt usually bear the expenses of these rituals.

On the 17th or 30th day after a girl's first menarche, the Anjukottu Maravar girl is ritually bathed and relatives are invited for a feast. In the past, the girl was made to live in a separate hut erected for the occasion, but nowadays she is confined to an isolated corner of. the house.

In an Anjukottu Maravar marriage, the boy's family usually

takes the initiative to arrange the alliance. Once the alliance is fixed, the betrothal ceremony is arranged. One day prior to the wedding, the bride's brother, along with friends, visits the bridegroom's village and invites the bridegroom to the marriage. The wedding sari is brought by the bridegroom's family. The *thali*-tying is the main wedding ritual. The first knot is tied by the bridegroom and the other two by his eldest sister. Garlands are then exchanged by the couple three times. After this, the bride gives a coconut, vermilion, banana, turmeric in a plate to the *nathanar* (sister of the bridegroom). Once these rituals are over, the couple have to go to the bride-groom's house three times before the marriage is consummated. On the third day after the marriage, the *thali* thread is changed by the *nathanar*.

When an Anjukottu Maravar dies, the body is washed and draped in new clothes. Some paddy and a coconut are kept near the head. After the last respects are paid, the body is washed again, with the water specifically brought for the purpose by the relatives, before it is taken for cremation or burial. The eldest son in case of his father and the youngest in case of his mother perform the last rites. On the day following the death, rice balls are offered to the dead and the mother's brother ties a turban around the son's head. The obsequies are performed on the 7th or 9th or 16th day. If the body is cremated, the mortal remains are immersed in the sea at Devipattinam or are scattered in a tank. A Brahman is invited to perform the rituals on this occasion and rice balls are offered to the ancestors. The first death anniversary is customarily observed. In case an infant dies, the body is buried within the courtyard of the house. If the infant is the firstborn, it is often buried within the house.

Most Anjukottu Maravar are agriculturists. Only a few depend on agricultural or other kinds of labour. In the past, some of them used to work as village watchmen and even now a few of them are engaged in regulating water for irrigation purposes on payment. Only a few men are engaged in business or service occupations. Several cultivate their own land, but others engage tenants to do the job.

An *ambalakarar* or the village elders usually adjudicate in

disputes, including divorce cases. In most of the villages, traditional village councils do not exist, so, whenever an occasion presents itself, some community elders join together to adjudicate. They, along with the other Maravar groups, have formed caste associations.

Except for some Anjukottu Maravar who were converted to Christianity before 1947 near Puliyal and nearby villages, all others are Hindus. They worship the deities of the wider pantheon, such as Siva and Rama, as well as local regional deities such as Murugan and Meenakshiamman. But the prime place in their pantheon is accorded to family deities such as Kaliamman, Sathiyamman and Theravadiamman. Ayyanar is an important deity worshipped by all the Maravar. Their sacred centres are Devipattinam, Rameswaram and Tiruchendur. Panguni Uttaram, Chitthirai Paurnami, Pongal, Adi and Deepavali are some of the festivals they celebrate.

Traditional intercommunity linkages, in the form of patron-client relations, still exist in Anjukottu Maravar villages. They accept food and water from the Brahman, the Vellalar and other such communities. Food and water are exchanged with the Vellalar, the Kallar and the Agamudaiyar. The Nadar accept food and water from them, but the Anjukottu Maravar do not reciprocate. Taking food and water from communities such as the Pallan and Parayan is avoided. Cultivator-labourer, employer-labourer, landlord-tenant relationships are forged and maintained with the Pallan, the Parayan and such communities. The *ambattan* perform certain death rituals and the Pallan or the Parayan convey news of death and act as *melakkarar* (drummer) for the Anjukottu Maravar. For these services, payments are usually made in kind or cash. Their links with the other Maravar subgroups and the Mukkulathor groups, such as the Kallar and Agamudaiyar, are being reinforced.

The Anjukottu Maravar favour formal education, modern medicare and family welfare programmes. Drinking water sources are scarce in some of their areas. Governmental schemes are made use of.

P. ADITI (MUKHERJEE)

Appanadu Kondaiyamkottai Maravar

The Appanadu Kondaiyamkottai Maravar are more precisely called Appanadu Maravar or Kondaiyamkottai Maravar. It is one among the subcastes of the Maravar caste cluster of Tamil Nadu. It is also called a territorial division among the Maravar. Thevar is the community titles. It is said that they migrated from Kiluvainadu (now the southernmost part of Tamil Nadu, adjoining Kerala) to Esanadu and, later, to their present home in Appanadu.

It is narrated that, long ago, a king by name Karana Maravar ruled the Ramanathapuram area (Esanadu). He and his soldiers were tyrants and the people of his kingdom were terrified of him. In those days, Malamandi and Kilakarai were the two major weekly markets. The men used to go hunting and their women went as vegetable vendors to the market. One day, the Karana Maravar soldiers teased a young vegetable vendor. The girl begged her caste men to avenge her dishonour. Their *vetryamalai* (head of the Appanadu Maravar) announced a meeting of the men of the community in the centre of their territory, Appanadu, and there they chalked out a plan to kill the king. They sought the help of king's shepherd, who told them the secrets of the fort. When they killed the king, they declared themselves rulers of the Appanadu territory, bounded by Appanur, Kovilankulam, Kaidathirakkai and Kanikur in the east, west, north and south respectively. The men wore their hair in a *kondaiyam* (a big tuft at the back of the head) as a mark of courage and bravery. And so they came to be called the Appanadu Kondaiyamkottai Maravar.

The Appanadu Kondaiyamkottai Maravar are now found scattered in all the districts of the State, but their concentration is greater in the southern districts, such as Ramanathapuram, Madurai, Pasumpon Muthuramalingam, Kamarajar and Tirunelveli. The entire Appanadu territory is a drought-prone area. They speak Tamil among themselves as well as with others and use the same script.

Old women of the Appanadu Kondaiyam Kottai Maravar community wear big gold *tandai* (earrings). Their earlobes are stretched by the heavy weight of the *tandai*. Moreover, they

wear the sari in a different fashion. Men generally wear the *veshti* (lower garment) but no upper garment.

The Appanadu Kondaiyam Kottai Maravar are regular nonvegetarian, but do not eat beef or pork. Their staple foods are millets, *ragi* and rice. They eat all kinds of pulses, vegetables, roots and tubers. Groundnut oil is used for cooking. Their fruit consumption is occasional. Menfolk consume liquors. Milk and milk products are consumed. They smoke *beedis* and cigarettes. Both men and women chew betel and tobacco. A few are addicted to snuff.

The Appanadu Kondaiyam Kottai Maravar are divided into nine *kottu* (clans) and 18 *kilai* (lineages). Each *kottu* is divided into two *kilais.* Both *kottu* and *kilai* are affiliated to a tree, flower, fruit or animal. They follow matrilineal descent and *kottu* exogamy. The *kottu* and *kilai* are given below. The *kilais* are generally named after a saint, a brave man or an occupational term. The *kilais* indicate descent and regulate marriage alliances.

	Clan (kottu)		*Lineage* (kilai)
1.	Karpaga *Kottu*	1.	Marudeesar
	(Wishing tree)	2.	Agatheesar
2.	Mundriya *Kottu*	3.	Vettuvan
	(Cashewnut tree)	4.	Azhagapandiyan
3.	Kamugam *Kottu*	5.	Vennayan
	(Arecanut tree)	6.	Perutataram
4.	Malligai *Kottu*	7.	Sevar
	(Jasmine tree)	8.	Valveeman
5.	Ela *Kottu*	9.	Kodayam
	(Leaf tree)	10.	Arasan
6.	Milakai *Kottu*	11.	Jayamkondar
	(Chilli plant)	12.	Veeramudithansimar
7.	Takkali *Kottu*	13.	Sangaram
	(Tomato plant)	14.	Sathani
8.	Thennam *Kottu*	15.	Avvaiyar
	(Coconut tree)	16.	Sambuvan
9.	Ciraham *Kottu*	17.	Natravendarar
	(Cumin plant)	18.	Tarumat

There is no hierarchy amongst the *kottu* and *kilai* of the Appanadu Kondaiyamkottai Maravar community. Still, most of them use the caste title Thevar which commands respect from the others in the local area.

The Appanadu Kondaiyamkottai Maravar follow community endogamy and *kottu* exogamy. Maternal uncle-niece marriages

are not allowed among them because both belong to the same *kilai* and *kottu* in their society. They follow matrilineal descent. On the other hand, the children of a brother and sister may marry, and should do so, if this can be arranged. Though the brother and sister are of the same *kilai,* their children are not, because the children of the brother belong to that of their mother, who is of a different *kilai.* This traditional cross-cousin marriage is a compulsion in the community. Child marriages took place in the past, but no longer. Marriage alliances are made by negotiation. Monogamy is the community norm but polygyny is also allowed. *Thali, bottu* and *metti* are the marriage symbols. Levirate was allowed among them three to four decades ago, but not now. *Parisam* is paid in cash. Dowry is also paid, both in cash and kind. The rule of residence is patrilocal. Divorce is permitted with the approval of the *oor panchayat.* Either spouse can divorce on grounds of adultery, barrenness, maladjustment, impotence, cruelty and insanity. *Theervai* (compensation) is paid to the aggrieved party. Children of the divorced parents live with either parent in terms of the judgement of the caste council. Remarriage is allowed for both widowers and divorcees of either sex. However, nowadays widows are not willing to remarry. Sororate is permitted.

Nuclear families are dominant over vertically extended ones at present, but some Appanadu Kondaiyamkottai Maravar still follow the tradition of extended families. They do not observe any kind of avoidance relationships. A joking relationship exists amongst brothers-in-law as well as among sisters-in-law and with grandparents. The rule of inheritance is male equigeniture. The rule of *thalaimai* (succession) is by the eldest son.

The Appanadu Kondaiyamkottai Maravar women are hard working, like their men. They participate in agricultural operations. Some old women even guard the crops during the night. The women are very brave and have great self-esteem. They look after the cattle and sell the milk and milk products. They participate in social functions, and religious rituals. They observe fasting during festive days and offer *pongal* to the deities at temple fairs and festivals. Women participate in other economic activities. A few are in government and private organisations, others work as agricultural and industrial

labourers. Women are consulted in decision-making. They contribute to the family income and control family expenditure.

The Appanadu Kondaiyamkottai Maravar observe *valaikappu* or *sorukattupodurathu* (pre-delivery ritual) during the seventh or ninth month in the husband's house. All the expenditure of the ritual is borne by the woman's parents. She is then taken to her natal home for delivery. During advanced pregnancy, the woman does not visit any temple or participate in any religious activities. She also does not go outside during eclipses. They observe birth pollution for five or seven days. During the pollution period, the mother and the child live in a secluded room. On the fifth or seventh day, both the mother and the child take ceremonial baths. On the same day, the *uttuthal* (postnatal ritual) is observed. Its celebration is similar to that of *sorukattupodurathu*. All the expenditure for the ritual is borne by the woman's in-laws. An auspicious day is selected to name the child.

The Appanadu Kondaiyamkottai Maravar observe the tonsuring ceremony within the first year or when the child is three at the *kuladeivam's* temple. *Pongal* (cooked rice) is offered to the deity. The ear-boring ceremony is conducted for girls on the same day. By tradition, the maternal uncle of the child first clips a bit of the hair of the child.

When an Appanadu Kondaiyamkottai Maravar girl attains puberty, a temporary hut is constructed with coconut leaves for her stay during the pollution period. She bathes and goes to the isolation hut. Her diet includes rich protein foods, such as egg, chicken, gingelly oil and jaggery. Puberty pollution terminates on the 45th day after a ceremonial bath. On the same evening, *poopunita neerattu vizha* (puberty ceremony) is celebrated. The maternal uncle of the girl gives her new clothes.

Cross-cousin marriage is a compulsion in the Appanadu Kondaiyamkottai Maravar community. If a man does not marry his *morai ponnu* (mother's brother's daughter or father's sister's daughter, the traditional choice), it becomes a major issue. Such cases are taken to the *kula panchayat*. If the man rejects his *morai ponnu*, his younger brother should marry the girl, even if he is younger than her. Almost all marriages in the

community are consanguineous. At times, wives are older than their husbands in the community. Though consanguineous marriage is preferred, negotiation is compulsory. The boy's parents go and ask the girl's parents for the girl, according to custom. They pay two one rupee coins as *parisam* and take the *varadakshina* (dowry) as negotiated in return. Marriage rituals are observed at the bride's house. Immediately thereafter, the bride goes to the bridegroom's house in a bullock cart. They return to the bride's home on the next day and the consummation ceremony takes place on the third day. A Brahman priest conducts the marriage rites.

If a death occurs among the Appanadu Kondaiyamkottai Maravar, a Chakkiliyan conveys the message to the relatives of the deceased. The corpse is bathed and dressed in new clothes. It is then placed on a bier and decorated with flowers. After the children and *pangalis* of the deceased pour water into the mouth of the corpse, the bier is carried to the cremation ground in procession, accompanied by the Chakkiliyan playing music. If the deceased is a firstborn, the corpse is cremated, otherwise it is buried. The eldest and youngest sons are the chief mourners for the father and mother respectively. All the sons of the deceased tonsure their heads on the 31st day or on the Amavasya day after cremation. On the third day after cremation bones and ash collection, and of pouring milk are observed. On the same day, the *asthi* (mortal remains) are disposed of in the sea at a sacred centre such as Rameswaram, Mariyar and Mukkayar. A small feast is given to the men who attend the cremation. On the 16th day, *karumathi* (death ceremony) is observed and a feast is served to the men who attended the cremation. On the following day, Brahman priests perform *punyavachanam* (terminating pollution). They do not observe *thithi* (annual ceremony) for the deceased like other communities. They observe ancestor worship during Pongal.

It is said that the Appanadu Kondaiyamkottai Maravar were poligars, fuedal chiefs, soldiers of the Nayak kings, in historical times. Some were robbers and dacoits in the colonial period. Others were shepherds. Now, most of them depend on agriculture and cattle-rearing. These are their primary occupations. Some work in government and private organisations.

Others are agricultural and industrial labourers, skilled and unskilled casual labourers, rickshaw-pullers, masons, salt-makers, mat- and basket-weavers. They have direct links with the market. Payments are made both in cash and kind in the local area. Due to landlessness and drought, many have migrated to urban centres to become industrial and daily wage casual labourers.

The Appanadu Kondaiyamkottai Maravar community have an *oor panchayat* (caste council) and a *nadu panchayat* (territorial panchayat for the entire community) for social control. The *panchayattar's* (head) post is hereditary. All disputes in a village are settled in the *nadu panchayat*. The guilty are punished with cash fines, social boycott and excommunication for repeated crimes and offences. The cash fines are used for village development projects, such as temple renovation, conducting fairs and festivals and lake digging. In recent times, the three Mukkulathor communities, namely the Kallar, the Maravar and the Agamudaiyar have jointly started Mukkulathor Sangams everywhere and a regional Thevar Peravai for their welfare as well as for political benefits.

The Appanadu Kondaiyamkottai Maravar are Hindus. They have family deities such as Ariyanayaki, Muniyandi, Murugan, Karupanaswamy and Vallivittal; village deities, such as Mariamma, Muthumariamma, Durga, Ayyanar and Karuppaswamy; and regional deities such as Sri Ranganathaswamy, Ramanathaswamy of Rameswaram, Lord Venkateswara of Tirupati, Madurai Meenakshi, Samayapuram Mariamma and Akilandesweri of Trivanaikaval. They celebrate all major Hindu festivals, such as Vijayadasami, Deepavali, Pongal, Karthigai, Tamil New Year's Day, Sivaratri, Krishna Jayanthi, Ramnavami and Ganesh Chaturthi.

The Appanadu Kondaiyamkottai Maravar have an oral tradition. Both men and women sing folk-songs during agricultural operations, fairs and festivals.

The Appanadu Kondaiyamkottai Maravar accept food and water from all high caste Hindus, such as the Brahman, the Chettiar and communities equal to them in status. They exchange water and food with other Mukkulathor communities. Water sources and cremation grounds are shared with others.

The service castes and artisans render their services to the Appanadu Kondaiyamkottai Maravar during their rituals and ceremonies. The community has businessmen, white-collar jobholders, teachers, engineers, doctors, lawyers, defence employees, freedom fighters and also national level political leaders.

The Appanadu Kondaiyamkottai Maravar favour formal education. However, some students drop out due to economic reasons. They favour indigenous and modern medicare as well as family planning. Drinking water is not available within their locality in some areas and women bring potable water from distant places. Most of them do not use electricity because of poverty. Firewood, kerosene, cowdung cakes, coal and L.P gas are used as fuel.

V.S. DEEP KUMAR

Karana Maravar

The Karana Maravar are one of the least referred to subgroups of the Maravar and are numerically smaller. They are believed to be a branch of the Kondaiyamkottai Maravar who separated in the 17th-18th Centuries. There are two versions as to the etymology of the word *karana*, the first being that they are the worshippers of Karana, another name for Lord Siva, and the other deriving from the word *karana*, 'reason', and indicating that they have been differentiated from the Kondaiyamkottai Maravar for a reason. The reason cited in this context refers to a legend which tells of a Kondaiyamkottai Maravar woman being teased vulgarly by some youth when she went to sell vegetables. This led to a fight between the girl's group and that of her tormentors. Although a settlement was worked out, the two groups split and the Karana Maravar came into existence. This new group was driven from the main Maravar areas to the coastal regions. At present, they are distributed in 11 villages, which were granted to them by Sethupathy, the then king of Ramanathapuram after he appointed a *thevar* and a *servaikkarar* from amongst them. These villages are in the present Ramanathapuram District. The Karana

Maravar speak Tamil among themselves and use the Tamil script.

The Karana Maravar are nonvegetarian, but do not eat beef or pork. Rice is their staple food. They also eat pulses and seasonal vegetables. Groundnut oil is used for cooking. A few men consume liquor. Smoking of *beedis*, cigarettes, country cheroot by men and chewing of betel leaves with arecanuts by both the sexes are common. Snuff is used by a few men.

The Karana Maravar are divided into six matrilineal descent groups called *kilai* — the Deva *kilai*, Pandyan *kilai*, Paru Vachan *kilai*, Vlattan *kilai*, Murangathini *kilai* and Rayar *kilai*. As there are no female descendants at present in the lone Deva *kilai* family, it may be said that the Deva *kilai* is practically non-existent. The major functions of these *kilais* are to regulate marriage alliances and indicate descent and ancestry. Thevar and Servaikkarar are the two titles commonly used by them, but, of late, the titles are not used. Some of them consider themselves to be Sudras in the *varna* order, others think they are Kshatriyas.

The Karana Maravar, after they separated from the Kondaiyamkottai Maravar, remained an isolated group for many years. But now, in the prevailing environment, they intermarry with the other Maravar subgroups, including the Kondaiyamkottai. So, the rule of community endogamy has come to be eroded. But *kilai* exogamy is strictly observed. Patrilateral and matrilateral cross-cousin marriages, particularly the former, are preferred. Uncle-niece marriage is taboo. Parallel-cousin marriage, that is the brother's children, if they belong to two different *kilais*, can marry, but the instances are rare. Their boys and girls get married when they are between 18 and 25 years. Monogamy is the norm. Polygyny, though allowed, is reportedly rare. Levirate is not permitted, but sororate, both senior and junior, is allowed. A token bride-price is paid. Now, dowry is also paid. Toe-rings and the *thali* are the marriage symbols. In the past, the men too used to wear *minji* as a marriage symbol, but no longer. Residence, after marriage, is patrilocal. Divorce is avoided. In case of maladjustment between spouses, they live separately for some time. If, even after this, there is no apparent settlement between

the two, divorce is secured. In the past, heavy compensation was levied on the spouse demanding the divorce, but now a reasonable amount is decided on. Widow remarriage is rare, but widowers are freely allowed to remarry.

A majority of the Karana Maravar live in joint families. Usually, after the father's death, the conjugal families set up nuclear households. The husband's elder brother and parents-in-law are avoidance relatives. Cross-cousins and wife's younger siblings are joking relatives. Male equigeniture is the rule of inheritance, but the eldest son is, at times, given a slightly larger share. The eldest son succeeds the father as the head of family. The hereditary positions, such as *thevar* and *servaikkarar*, also pass on in the same fashion.

The Karana Maravar woman engage in gainful economic activity either at home or outside. They have roles in ritual and religious activities and in familial decision-making.

During the fifth, seventh or ninth month of a Karana Maravar woman's first pregnancy, relatives from her natal family arrive to perform a pre-delivery ritual called *valaikappu* before she is taken to her natal home for delivery. On this occasion, the pregnant woman is fed with five different kinds of cooked rice, sweets and fruits. On delivery, the child is ritually bathed. Before it is suckled, a drop of sugar solution is dropped into its mouth. On the second day, the mother is bathed and on the 16th day an informal *sadangu* may be arranged. In the first or third month, a heated needle is used to make marks on the forehead and the stomach of the child. Usually, after the first month, the woman returns to her husband's house. It is only after the first month that the child can be taken to a temple. The naming ceremony is performed only after the third month. On the first Sivaratri in the month of *Masi*, the child is tonsured and its ears pierced. The maternal uncle bears the expenses of this ceremony. Upon attaining menarche, a Karana Maravar girl is kept secluded till her maternal uncle arranges for the performance of *sastiram* (puberty ceremony) on the 16th or 30th day. The betrothal (*nichayathartham*) ceremony among the Karana Maravar is usually held 15 days before the marriage, but can even be held on the day previous to the marriage. During the betrothal ceremony, the bride is

given Rs. 21, a sari, flowers, coconuts, bananas, betel leaves and arecanuts. Marriages are solemnised at the bride's residence and are presided over by the *thevar* and *servaikkarar*. The *thali*-tying around the bride's neck is the chief marriage ritual. The bridegroom ties one knot, followed by two knots by his sister. After that, the maternal uncle of the girl joins the hands of the bridal couple.

The Karana Maravar usually bury their dead except in case of the firstborn or those who die abnormally. The dead body is bathed twice, the second time with water specifically brought for the occasion, after which the body is dressed in new clothes. Before the body is taken for burial or cremation, the Navithan and the Pandaram blow the conch shell. The daughter of the deceased breaks a pot of water after going around the body thrice. On that very day, all the sons are tonsured. In case there are no sons, the daughter's left forearm is shaved. Before the burial or cremation, the *thevar* and *servaikkarar* sprinkle some rice and drop a few coins on the body and all the sons circle the body three times. The eldest son, the chief mourner, performs the *kolli*. The mortal remains are collected on the second day. On the 16th day they are immersed in holy waters. On the third or 16th day, a turban is tied around the head of the successor by the affines. On the 16th day, *karumathi*, the final death rite, is performed. On this day, *pongal* (a sweet rice preparation) is offered at the burial ground and food is served to the poor. A tomb for the dead person may be erected. The dead are remembered and offered *sradh* on the day of the first anniversary.

The Karana Maravar are an agricultural, landowning community. Only a few of them are landless. A good number of them are employed in governement service. Their women also accept employment. A few Karana Maravar are involved in business and trade. Some are dependent on fishing.

The *thevar* and *servaikkarar*, the traditional functionaries of the community, are still the indisputable leaders of the Karana Maravar. They are kept informed of all familial and community matters, as the *thevar* and *servaikkarar* have some role to perform in all social matters. These two leaders, usually together and sometimes with or without the help of other community lead-

ers, arbitrate in disputes and adjudicate divorce cases. Usually a compromise is reached between the disputants, otherwise the guilty are fined. In case of intercaste matters they call a common panchayat to settle the issues.

The Karana Maravar are Hindus. Every family, in addition to such family deities as Viyya Vandamman, Tiru Nageswaran, Tiruvadi Ayyanar and Ilayanachi Amman, also worship regional deities such as Pillaiyar, Siva and Murugan. The first day of *Avani* (August), Masi Sivaratri and Malaikattu are some of the important festivals celebrated by them. Tiruchendur, Palani, Rameswaram and Sabarimalai are a few of their sacred centres. They worship the *kadal* (sea) and bring seawater to sprinkle around the home. A few families have converted to Christianity. In the last two decades or so, the Karana Maravar have come to have larger interaction with the other Maravar groups, especially the Kondaiyamkottai Maravar. They accept food and water from the Brahman and the Vellalar and exchange the same with communities such as the Nadar. These commensal norms are no longer strictly followed. They have service relations with communities such as the Brahman, Achari, Navithan, Pandaram and Konar.

The Karana Maravar's attitude towards formal education is positive. They prefer modern medicare and the family planning programme is being increasingly adopted. The new thrust given to the adult education programme has received an enthusiastic response from them. Self-employment programmes are utilised.

P.B.S.V. PADMANABHAM

Kondaiyamkottai Maravar

The Kondaiyamkottai Maravar are also referred to as the Maravar or Thevar. There are different versions as to the etymology of the word *kondaiyamkottai*. Some are of the opinion that they used to wear their hair in a knot across the nape called *kondai*. Others are of the opinion that the word *kondai* is a derivative of a Tamil word *kendiyan* meaning 'fish' — the fish being a symbol of the Pandya kings. As the Kondaiyamkottai Maravar

were allied to, or are believed to have descended from, the Pandyas, they came to be called so. Some of their localised groups, like the Arupangu Nattar, Talaivanar and Malavarayar, are, in real terms, endogamous groups. Similar is the case of the Appanadu Ravikula Kondaiyamkottai Maravar, who are settled in Appanadu, which consists of 440 or so villages in a few taluks in Ramanathapuram District. In theoretical terms, they are not a separate subcaste. Some of these subcastes believe they are migrants from the Madurai area, the seat of the ertstwhile Pandya Kingdom, and settled in Ramanathapuram and Tirunelveli Districts. Others believe that they migrated from an unspecified *kuluvanadu* — it is identified as Kilakunadu, meaning eastern country. Some of the localised subgroups of the Kondaiyamkottai Maravar and their distribution are: Appanadu Kondaiyamkottai Maravar and Appanadu Ravikula Kondaiyamkottai Maravar in the Muthukulathur, Kamuthi and Sayalgudi areas of Ramananthapuram District. The Arupangu Nattar are near Nanguneri, the Malavarayar are in Ambasamudram and the Talaivanar in the western Tirunelveli District. They speak in Tamil and write in Tamil script. Those settled adjacent to Kerala can speak Malayalam as well. Nowadays their males do not wear their hair in a *kondai*, but the women still do.

The Kondaiyamkottai Maravar are nonvegetarian, but do not eat pork or beef. Rice, their staple food, is supplemented with *ragi* and millets. They also eat pulses and vegetables. Consumption of fruit, milk and milk products is moderate. Men take alcoholic drinks. They smoke cigarettes, *beedis* and country cheroots. Snuff is used by a few. Chewing of betel leaves and arecanuts is common.

Except for some localised territorial groups such as the Appanadu Ravikula Kondaiyamkottai Maravar and the Appanadu Kondaiyamkottai Maravar, there are no clearcut subgroups among them. They are divided into six or nine *kottus*, each of which in turn is divided into six or two *kilais*. Thus, in total, there are 18 *kilais*. The functional utility of the different *kottus* are no longer remembered by them, nor can they remember the different *kottus* or *kilais*. The names of only 12 *kilais* are now available. Some of the *kottus* are: Milaku *Kottu*, Vettale *Kottu*, Thennang *Kottu*, Kamuham *Kottu*, Ichang *Kottu*

and Panang *Kottu*; while the *kilais* include: Alagar Pandyan *Kilai*, Maru Veedu *Kilai*, Agastheswar *Kilai* and Sedar *Kilai*. The important change that has come about in their social divisions is that the functional utility of the *kottu* is not followed, for it was used as an exogamous group some decades ago. The *kilai* divisions are indeed descent groups reckoned in the female line and serve as exogamous groups nowadays. A majority of them say they belong to the Sudra *varna*, but a vocal minority assert that they are Kshatriyas because of their legendary associations with the Pandya rulers.

Community endogamy and *kilai* exogamy are the rules observed by the Kondaiyamkottai Maravar. Cross-cousin marriages of both patrilateral as well as matrilateral types are allowed, but the former are preferred in some areas. Uncle-niece marriage is forbidden. Parallel cousins can marry, provided they belong to different titles but this happens rarely. In some sections of the Kondaiyamkottai Maravar, the father's sister's daughter's daughter is also preferred for marriage. In some places, the father's sister plays such an important role that without her consent the nephew's marriage cannot be solemnised. Generally, boys marry between 22 and 25 years of age, and girls after 18. Monogamy is the norm, but polygyny is resorted to in some cases. Sororate and levirate are permitted. Marriage symbols for women are the *thali* and *minji*. In the past, men too wore toe-rings as marriage symbols, but no longer. In some places, this practice appears to have survived to the extent that the men wear *minji* for three days after their marriage and then remove them. A token bride-price is paid, but large dowries are also paid. After marriage, residence is patrilocal. Divorce is allowed. Widows, widowers and divorcees are allowed to remarry.

Nuclear families predominate over joint and extended families among the Kondaiyamkottai Maravar. Male equigeniture is the norm, but in some cases the eldest son is given a little more share. The eldest son succeeds as head of the family. An avoidance relationship exists with parents-in-law. Cross-cousins, husband's younger brother and wife's younger brothers and sisters are joking relatives.

The Kondaiyamkottai Maravar women, in addition to their

household work are engaged as labour and contribute to the family income. The woman's consent is taken in family managament and decision-making. Their participation in household and life-cycle rituals and in religious activities is important. However, in general, their status is secondary to that of their men.

During a Kondaiyamkottai Maravar woman's first pregnancy, a pre-delivery ritual called *valaikappu* is performed in the fifth, seventh or ninth month after which she is taken to her natal home for confinement. On delivery, the child is bathed and made to taste a drop of its father's blood, a practice that has been mostly given up now. On the 16th day, the child is named and the mother is given a ritual bath. Birth pollution lasts for 16 days. Ear-boring and tonsuring ceremonies are performed, usually on the same day, in the family deity's temple. The father's sister and mother's brother play important roles in these rituals.

Upon attaining menarche, a Kondaiyamkottai Maravar girl is secluded for five or seven days. On the 16th day, the girl is ritually bathed to end pollution.

Betrothal (*nichayathartham*) precedes marriage among the Kondaiyamkottai Maravar. The important marriage ceremony, the *thali*-tying, is done by the bridegroom and his sister. The marriage is consummated after the couple make three visits to the bridegrooms's house and after offering prayers in the *kuladeivam's* temple.

The dead among the Kondaiyamkottai Maravar are usually buried. Only the first born are cremated. On the 16th day after death, the last rites (*karumathi)* are performed. The mortal remains are immersed in a river or the sea, in the case of cremation.

The Kondaiyamkottai Maravar are a landholding community. Most of them depend on agriculture. In the past, before the abolition of *zamindari*, some of them enjoyed *poligar* rights. Several of them were village watchmen (*kavalkarar*). In the last few decades, many of them have entered professions, services, trade and business. Some of them are tenant farmers. Others solely depend on wage labour in agricultural and non-agricultural operations.

In some villages, the traditional *nattanmai* oversees commu-

nity matters and looks after arbitration and the mechanism of social control. In some places their modern caste association, the Thevar Peravai, looks after the community activities.

Except for some Kondaiyamkottai Maravar who were converted to Christianity, they are mostly Hindus. Family deities, such as Karuppaswamy and Isakki Amman, local-regional deities, such as Murugan and Ganesh, and deities of the wider pantheon, such as Siva, Rama, Venkateswara and Ramanathaswamy, are all worshipped. Ayyanar, Sudalai Madan and Muneeswarar are other deities they worship. Pongal, Adi and Sivaratri are some of the festivals they celebrate. They also celebrate the periodic festivals of their *kuladeivams* and, on these occasions, all the members of the patrilineal unit have to be present and collectively offer worship. They have community specific folktale and folk-songs. Their lullabies are famous. Their *jallikattu* (bull-fight) is also famous.

In the regional social hierarchy, the Kondaiyamkottai Maravar are considered lower than the Brahman and the Vellalar, from whom they accept food and water. Exchange of food and water is permitted with the Agamudaiyan, the Kallar and, sometimes, the Nadar. Service castes such as the Vishwakarma and the Ambattan, in some places, exchange food and water with them. Scheduled Castes like the Pallan and the Parayan are avoided in matters of food and water. However, these traditional norms are enforced only in some villages. Patron-client relations with the serving castes exist.

The Kondaiyamkottai Maravar favour formal education. Both modern and indigenous medicare are used by them. Many women have adopted birth control methods. Governmental schemes and amenities are made use of.

P.B.S.V. PADMANABHAM

Maravar Christian

There are both Protestants and Roman Catholics among the Maravar Christian. They were converted to Christianity by missionaries such as John De Britto, Schwartz and Constantius

J. Beschi. Though they have become Christians, they observe certain pre-conversion practices.

The Maravar Christian are nonvegetarian and their diet is more or less the same as that of their Hindu counterparts. Their staple food is rice. They eat all vegetables, pulses and fruits. Men drink liquor occasionally.

Social divisions exist at clan and lineage levels among the Maravar Christian. They are known as *kottu* (tree) and *kilai* (branches of tree) respectively among the Kondaiyamkottai Maravar. The clans are Milagu (pepper vine), Vettilai (betel vine), Thennai (coconut), Kamuham (arecanut), Ichang (dates) and Panang (palmyra). *Kilai* (lineage) are Viramudithanginan Sedar, Semanda, Agastyar, Maruvidu, Alakhiya Pandiyan, Vaniyan, Vettuvan, Nadaivendar, Kelnambhi, Anbutran, Gautaman, Sadachi, Sangaran, Pichipillai, Akhili, Lakamurti, and Jambuvar. The clans among the Sembinattu Maravar are Marikka, Piccha, Tondaman, Sistrama, Thanicha, Karupurath and Katra. Both clans and lineages are exogamous septs. The clans and lineages indicate descent and regulate marriage alliances. The *kilai* (lineage) among the Kondaiyamkottai Maravar is reckoned from mother to child and, hence, maternal uncle-niece marriage is not permitted. The community's self-perception and its perception by others are that it is of medium social rank. They are aware of the *varna* system, but it is not applicable to them as they are Christians.

The Maravar Christian follow endogamy at the community level and exogamy at clan and lineage levels. Monogamy is the norm. Marriage with father's sister's daughter and mother's brother's daughter are practised with the permission of the church. Divorce is not permitted. Widow remarriage and sororate are allowed.

Family relationships and the status of women among the Maravar Christian are the same as they are among Hindu Maravars. The rule of inheritance is equigeniture.

Pre-delivery rituals and birth pollution are not observed in the Maravar Christian community. For the first delivery, the pregnant women is taken to her natal home. The child is baptised within a month of birth. Roman Catholics observe the tonsuring of children. Confirmation is performed during

adolescence. The boy or the girl is taught the holy scriptures and made aware of the importance of the baptism. After Confirmation, Holy Communion is given. Baptism, Confirmation and Holy Communion are the sacraments.

Sadangu (puberty rites) are performed for adolescent Maravar Christian girls, rather in the manner of puberty rites among Hindus. Maravar Christian marriages take place at church. Prior to the wedding, the betrothal takes place at the bride's residence, with the elders of both families exchanging betel. After the betrothal, the banns are read in the church by the priest to ascertain whether there is any impediment to or objection against the marriage. The marriage is solemnised by the church priest. The marriage ceremony involves exchange of vows by the bride and bridegroom, and the tying of the *thali* around the neck of the bride by the bridegroom, the exchange of garlands by the couple, blessing the couple and registration of the marriage. A feast is arranged on the occasion. The consummation of marriage takes place on the same day at the bridegroom's residence.

The Maravar Christian bury their dead in the church cemetery. The corpse is carried in processsion to the church in a coffin for absolution and from there to the cemetery for burial. The pastor blesses the deceased before the burial. On the third day, *kulimozhuguthal* (whitewashing the grave) is done. On the 16th day, the pastor conducts a prayer meeting at the deceased's house. The death anniversary is observed annually. Neither death pollution nor ancestor worship is observed.

The economic organisation of the Maravar Christian is the same as for their Hindu counterparts. Land is the natural resource and is controlled by individual proprietorship. There are both landholders and landless people in the community. Traditionally, they were soldiers, zamindars and *kavalkarar* (watchmen). Nowadays, they practise settled cultivation, and are in business, trade, labour, government service, private service, and self-employment. They maintain links with the market directly as well as through middlemen. Landlessness has caused an increase in the number of agricultural labour in rural areas. Wages are paid in cash.

The church council administers the church. The pastor, or

cash and kind. After marriage, the residence is patrilocal. In case of maladjustment between spouses, separation for two to three years is reported to be the practice, thereby giving the spouses a chance to compromise. But if this fails, a divorce is sought. Remarriage is allowed after divorce or widowhood. Most of them live in nuclear families. Parents-in-law come under avoidance relationships. There is a joking relationship among cross-cousins, uncle-niece, husband's younger brother and wife's younger siblings. All the sons are entitled to equal shares in the parental property. The eldest son succeeds as the head of the family.

Pulukka Maravar women are not entitled to a share in their parental property. They are engaged in wage-earning activities and contribute to the family income and participate in family management. They have an important role to perform in religious activities.

During a Pulukka Maravar woman's first pregnancy, it is compulsory for her parents to perform a pre-delivery ritual called *seemantham* or *valaikappu*. The ceremony is usually performed in the seventh or ninth month in her husband's house before she is taken for confinement to her natal home. Upon delivery, the child is bathed and is made to taste *senai*, a sugar solution. On the 16th or 17th day after delivery, the house is cleaned and all the old utensils in it are replaced with new ones. A *sadangu* is arranged in a moderate way. The child is named on that day. The child is tonsured and its earlobes are pierced in the family deity's temple or in a nearby temple after one year. After menarche, a Pulukka Maravar girl is confined to a makeshift shed of green coconut fronds before the *sadangu* is observed on the 16th day — it is the mother's brother's responsibility to arrange for, and bear, the expenses of this ceremony.

Betrothal (*nichayathartham*) precedes marriage among the Pulukka Maravar. On the day of the betrothal, bride-price (*parisam*) is paid and the marriage date is fixed. The marriage is solemnised at the bride's residence. The most important marriage ritual is the tying of the *thali*. The bridegroom ties the first knot and his sister ties the remaining two knots. In the past, a Brahman used to preside over the marriage rituals,

but nowadays, an influential person or the local leader often conducts the wedding.

Among the Pulukka Maravar, the firstborn are cremated, except in the case of infants. Others are buried. The dead body is bathed twice, once immediately after death and later with water specifically brought for the purpose by relatives, including sons. After the second bath, the corpse is dressed in new clothes and taken for cremation or burial. The eldest son is the chief mourner. On the 16th day after death, the final rituals, *karumathi,* are performed and the relatives served a feast. For one year after death, they neither attend auspicious ceremonies nor do they celebrate festivals. The first anniversary is compulsorily performed and the deceased and other dead ancestors, are offered *sradh.*

Only a few Pulukka Maravar own land. The others are engaged in wage labour, either in the agricultural or the non-agricultural sectors. Some of them have recently entered professions, services, trade and business. Their women are usually employed in wage labour, rolling *beedis* or in matchstick-making. Their children are also employed in wage labour.

The community affairs of the Pulukka Maravar, in the villages where their numbers are considerable, are looked after by a *thalaivar* from their own community. Arbitration and adjudication of disputes are done by the *thalaivar* with the help of other community elders. Some of them are associated with the Thevar Peravai, Mukkulathor Sangham and other such modern caste associations.

Most Pulukka Maravar are Hindus. Only a few are converts to Christianity, Ayyanar, Sudalai Madan, Madan, Subramanyaswamy, Parvathi and Lakshmi are some of their deities. Festivals such as Kodai Tiruvizha, Teppa Tiruvizha, Adi and Pongal are celebrated by them. Tiruchendur, Rameswaram and Sabarimalai are their sacred centres.

The Pulukka Maravar were once despised by the other Maravar subgroups as well as others. Earlier, even water was not offered to them. But now this attitude has changed. They take food and water from other Maravar groups as well as other communities such as the Nadar, the Pillai, the Konar and the Achari. They do not have any commensal ties with the Sched-

uled Castes, such as the Pallan, Parayan and Chakkiliyan. Patron-client relationships are reported with the Ambattan community.

The Pulukka Maravar favour formal education. But many of them cannot send their children to school due to poverty. Modern medicare is preferred to indigenous medicines. They are aware of family planning.

P.B.S.V. PADMANABHAM

Sembinattu Maravar

The Sembinattu Maravar are a distinct group of the Maravar from which the royal family of Sethupathis, the rulers of Ramanathapuram, descended. Once, all the area under the Sethupathis was called Maravanadu. They are the second most numerous of the different Maravar subgroups in Tamil Nadu, next to the Kondaiyamkottai Maravar. They use Thevar as a title. They are believed to have migrated from the area called Sembinadu in the Thanjavur District. Some feel that the word 'sembian' means Chola and they believe that they are the descendants of the Chola dynasty. In this context, they also state that the Kondaiyamkottai Maravar are the descendants of the Pandya dynasty. If the latter interpretation is correct, they might have arrived in Ramanathapuram some time in the 12th Century — when the Pandya rulers of Ramanathapuram were displaced by the Chola rulers who came from the Thanjavur area. Ramanathapuram and Sivaganga were thereafter ruled by the Maravar belonging to the Sembinattu division. They are largely distributed in the Ramanathapuram, Madurai, Pasumpon Muthuramalinga Thevar and Tirunelveli Districts. They speak Tamil and use the Tamil script.

The Sembinattu Maravar are nonvegetarian, but do not eat pork or beef. Rice is their staple food. They eat various pulses and vegetables. Their milk and fruit consumption is moderate. Men drink liquor and smoke cigarettes and *beedis*. Betel leaves and arecanuts are chewed. Snuff is used by some men.

The Sembinattu Maravar are divided into different matrilineal descent groups called *kilai*. It is reported that only three of

the *kilais* were among the original *kilais*. The seven extant *kilais* reported are Marikka *kilai*, Piccha *kilai*, Tondaman *kilai*, Sitrana *kilai*, Katra *kilai*, Karupathra *kilai* and Thanicha *kilai*. The Marikka *kilai* is considered superior to the other *kilais*, as the royal family of Ramanathapuram belongs to it. All other *kilais* are equal in status. Dumont (1963) notes that in some areas of Tirunelveli District, the Sembinattu Maravar do not have these exogamous matrilineal descent groups. The different *kilais* indicate descent and ancestry and help regulate marital alliances. Of all the subgroups of Maravar, including the most numerous of them, the Kondaiyamkottai Maravar the Sembinattu Maravar are considered the most superior. Owing to the fact that the Sembinattu Maravar ruled some parts of Tamil Nadu, most of them consider themselves Kshatriyas in the *varna* order.

The Sembinattu Maravar royal family maintains and chooses marital alliances from royal families elsewhere, without regard to the subgroup identity of those royal families. Otherwise, the Sembinattu Maravar maintain subgroup endogamy, though in the last few decades intermarriage among the various Maravar groups has become common. Generally, *kilai* exogamy is strictly observed. Both matri- and patrilateral cross-cousin marriages are practised. Brother's children, provided their *kilais* are different, are, theoretically, allowed to marry. But such marriages are rare. Uncle-niece marriage is not allowed. The age at marriage for boys and girls is above 25 and 18 years respectively. When no preferred cousins are available, mates are acquired through neogtiation. Monogamy is the norm, but polygyny is allowed. Sororate, usually of the junior type, is allowed. Bride-price is only nominal, but large dowry payments have come into vogue. After marriage, the residence is patrilocal. Divorce is allowed, so is remarriage of the divorced as well as the widowed.

Joint families are predominant among the Sembinattu Maravar. Male equigeniture is the rule. In the royal families, prior to Independence, the eldest son used to inherit almost all the property, including the throne. The eldest son succeeds the father as the head of the family. When there is no male heir, the daughter succeeds as head of the family.

Sembinattu Maravar women engage in economic activities outside the house. They also participate in religious rituals and social activities. However, their status is subsidiary to that of their men. Women of the royal family used to commit *sati* in the 18th Century. Some of these *satis* are still venerated and worshipped. In the absence of a male heir and after becoming a widow, the present descendant of the Sethupathis looks after her estate and properties personally — an instance of the self-sufficiency of the Sembinattu Maravar women.

During the seventh or ninth month of first pregnancy, the Sembinattu Maravar perform a pre-delivery ritual called *valaikappu* in the pregnant woman's affinal home. This is done by her natal family before they take her for confinement. On this occasion, she is given gifts, bangles and a taste of five different kinds of food items. After delivery, the child is given a bath on the same day and a drop of sugar solution to taste before it is suckled. The child is named on the 16th or 30th day by the paternal relatives. Tonsuring and ear-boring ceremonies are performed when the child is one. These ceremonies are performed in the temple of the father's family deity if the child is a firstborn, while for the rest of the children these rituals are done in the temple of the mother's family deity.

After menarche, the Sembinattu Maravar girl used to be secluded for about a month in a makeshift shed. Nowadays, this practice is no longer followed and she is kept secluded only for five days in a corner of the house or in a makeshift shed. The *sadangu* (puberty ceremony) is arranged either on the 16th or on 30th day.

The Sembinattu Maravar hold the engagement ceremony (*nichayathartham*) prior to the marriage to formalise the alliance, fix the marriage date and pay the *parisam*. The marriage is solemnised at the bride's house and is presided over by an elderly community member or a Brahman. The first knot of the *thali* is tied by the bridegroom and the other two by his sister. The marriage is consummated on the following day.

Usually, the firstborn among the Sembinattu Maravar are cremated, while others are buried. Before the body is taken away, it is bathed twice, the second time with water brought from the holy rivers or from a well. The *kolli* is performed by

the chief mourner, the eldest son. The mortal remains are immersed in holy waters. The obsequies are performed on the 16th day. On that day, the eldest son wears a turban and is given new clothes by the nearest affinal relatives. For one year or till the first death anniversary, the family members of the deceased do not visit temples or attend auspicious functions. On the first death anniversary, the dead and the family ancestors are remembered and offered *sradh*.

The Sembinattu Maravar are an agricultural land-owning community. In the past, some of them were village watchmen (*kavalakarar*). Nowadays, they have diversified their occupations. A number of them have entered government service, the professions, business and trade. Some of them have opted for self-employment with or without the help of the government.

In some Sembinattu Maravar villages, it is the *nattanmai* and in other villages a few community elders who oversee community affairs. They arbitrate in disputes and settle divorce cases. But it is reported that their influence is fast declining. Most Sembinattu Maravar have joined the larger community associations such as the Thevar Peravai and Mukkulathor Sangam.

The Sembinattu Maravar are Hindus. A few of them converted to Christianity about fifty years ago. Raja Rajeswari, Ayyanar, Karuppaswamy, Kaliatha, Nagandarswamy, Murugan, Krishna and Venkatachalapathy are some of their deities. They celebrate Pongal, Deepavali, Saraswati Puja and Karthigai Deepam. Rameswaram, Madurai and Ramanathapuram are their sacred centres.

The Sembinattu Maravar exchange food and water with all the other Maravar subgroup. Food and water are accepted from the Brahman and the Vellalar and exchanged with the Agamudaiyar and in some cases, with the Achari. However, these commensal norms are under strain. In the villages, patron-client relations are still maintained with the servicing communities.

The Sembinattu Maravar favour formal education and modern medicare. They are aware of family planning. They have access to all civic amenities.

P.B.S.V. PADMANABHAM

Sennelkottu Maravar

The Sennelkottu Maravar, also called Chenglangkottu Maravar, are largely distributed in and around Sathur. Their original village is said to be Mugavoor, near Sathur. Some of them are also called Karayalar because of their settlements on river and canal banks and because of their occupational specialisation. They also call themselves Karana Maravar, but do not identify with the Karana Maravar of Ramanathapuram District. Sathur and its surrounding areas where the Sennelkottu Maravar reside, used to be a part of the Pandara Maravar *zamindari*. The word 'pandara' may be a derivative of the Sanskrit word *bhandara*, meaning treasury. The Pandara Maravar are believed to have been the treasurers of the Pandyan and later the Nayakan kingdoms of Madurai and were later the *zamindars* of Sathur. The Sennelkottu Maravar closely identify with the Pandara Maravar who have now been reduced to a single family — and even the family members no longer reside in their former *zamindari*, for they have migrated to other areas of Tamil Nadu. Kadhirvelu (1977) notes that the Pandara Maravar are a subgroup of the Maravar, but makes no mention of the Sennelkottu Maravar. It could be that there are no historical records relating to the Sennelkottu Maravar. Some Sennelkottu Maravar state that they are in fact Sembinattu Maravar and, in support of this contention, they mention that they intermarry with the latter. This contention does not hold much for both these groups are vastly different in their social and structural features. The word *sennel* in Tamil means 'fresh-water fish'. Apart from this, no other etymological reference for the terms Sennelkottu or Chenglangkottu could be found. The Sennelkottu Maravar speak Tamil and use its script.

The Sennelkottu Maravar are nonvegetarian, but do not eat pork or beef. Rice and millet are their staple foods. They also eat pulses and seasonal vegetables. Groundnut oil and gingelly oil are used for cooking. Milk and milk products are consumed. Men take alcoholic drinks. Cigarettes, *beedis* and cheroots are smoked. They chew betel leaves with arecanuts. Some men use snuff.

The Sennelkottu Maravar are not divided into any endoga-

mous or exogamous divisions. They are divided only as *chokkarakarar* and *sambandakarar*, meaning kin and affines respectively. Except for a few who consider themselves Kshatriyas, the rest consider themselves Sudras in the *varna* system.

Community endogamy, which was considered an unalterable norm about a hundred years ago, is no longer followed by the Sennelkottu Maravar these days. They intermarry with other Maravar subgroups, including the Sembinattu Maravar, and the Mukkulathor groups such as the Kallar and the Agamudaiyar. Both patrilateral and matrilateral cross-cousin and uncle-niece marriages are preferred. Men usually get married between 22 and 25 years and women between 18 and 20. Apart from predetermined consanguineous marriages, other marriage alliances are negotiated. If an alliance outside the circle of matrilateral cross-cousins is sought, the maternal uncle's permission has to be secured. Monogamy is the norm, polygynous unions are rare. Levirate and sororate are permitted. Toe-rings and *thali* are the symbols of marriage for women. A token bride-price (*parisam*) used to be paid, but now *parisam* could run into thousands. In addition to *parisam*, a gold ornament is also given the bride. Whatever the amount of *parisam*, double that amount in cash has to be given as dowry by the bride's family. In addition, gold ornaments weighing 15 sovereigns are given. After marriage, the residence is patrilocal except when there is no male heir and a resident son-in-law is sought. Divorce is permitted, but the spouse who demands divorce has to pay a heavy compensation to the other. Remarriage after divorce or after the death of a spouse is permitted.

Both nuclear as well as extended families exist among the Sennelkottu Maravar. Paternal property is equally divided between all the sons. Women are given the maternal property if any. The eldest son succeeds as the head of the family. Parents-in-law and the husband's elder brother are the avoidance relations; husband's younger siblings, cross-cousins and, at times, grandparents and grandchildren are the joking relations.

Sennelkottu Maravar women work as wage labour in agricultural or non-agricultural activities. Their contribution to the family income is substantial. They participate in family man-

agement and their consent is sought in familial decisions. They do not take part in the social control mechanism.

In the seventh or ninth month of a Sennelkottu Maravar woman's first pregnancy, *valaikappu*, a predelivery ritual, is observed. The pregnant woman is fed with five different kinds of cooked rice and adorned with new bangles. After the ceremony, the pregnant woman is taken for confinement to her natal home. She returns to her husband's home with the child only in the third or fifth month after delivery. After delivery, the child is bathed and made to taste a drop of sugar solution (*senai*) before it is suckled. The mother can take a bath on the fifth day after delivery. On the 16th day after delivery, the mother and the child are ritually bathed and the child is named on that day by the father or an important relative. Tonsuring and ear-piercing rituals are performed in the family deity's temple when the child is one. On this occasion, the maternal uncle and paternal aunt play important roles.

Upon attaining menarche, the Sennelkottu Maravar girl is secluded in a corner of the house or in a makeshift shed for five or more days. A puberty ritual, *sadangu*, is performed on the 16th day. Here too, the maternal uncle plays an important role, besides bearing the expenses for the ritual.

Bride-price is paid on the day of betrothal (*nichayathartham*), which precedes a Sennelkottu Maravar wedding. The tying of the *thali* around the neck of the bride is the most important marriage ritual. The marriage is consummated on the day after the marriage. The couple visit the bride's residence at least three times within the first year after marriage, usually during festivals such as Pongal, New Year and Deepavali.

Among the Sennelkottu Maravar, the firstborn are usually cremated, while the others are buried. Children below five years of age who die are buried in the courtyard of the house. The dead are immediately bathed and dressed in a set of laundered clothes before the household rites are performed. Later, when the body is being taken away, it is again bathed in water specifically brought for the occasion by relatives, led by the chief mourner, usually the eldest son. After it is bathed for the second time, the body is dressed in new clothes. In case of cremation, the mortal remains are immersed in a river. On the 16th day, the final death rite, *karumathi* is performed

when the deceased is offered *sradh* and the relatives are feasted. For one year, the family members of the dead avoid visiting a temple or attending any auspicious function. The first death anniversary is observed. On the day of *karumathi*, after the mortuary rites are performed, the affinal relatives offer new clothes to the successor to the deceased and tie a turban round his head.

The Sennelkottu Maravar are a landholding community. Most of them are engaged either in cultivation or agricultural labour or both. Only a few are landless. Many of them are government servants, some are engaged in non-agricultural labour and some are in business.

There are hereditary *nattanmais* in the villages to look after the Sennelkottu Maravar community's activities, settle disputes and solve issues such as divorce. In Sathur and in a few other villages, the modern caste associations have by and large, taken the role of the *nattanmai* in adjudicating disputes. Besides the social control activities, these associations also have taken up welfare activities, such as education of the children, and organisation of festivals.

The Sennelkottu Maravar are Hindus. Ayyanar is their patron deity. They also worship family deities such as Karuppaswamy, Pudiyaswamy and Ekladeviamman; regional deities such as Murugan and Pillaiyar; and deities of the wider pantheon, such as Ramanathaswamy and Venkatachalapathy. Karthigai Deepam, Sivaratri, Pukkuli, Pongal, Deepavali and Adi are some of the festivals they celebrate.

The Sennelkottu Maravar have commensal links with all the Maravar groups as well as with the other Mukkulathor groups. They take food and water from communities such as the Brahman and the Vellalar. Of late, connubial links have been forged with other Maravar groups.

The Sennelkottu Maravar favour formal education for their children. They also attend adult education programmes. Modern medicare is preferred to indigenous medicines. Many have adopted modern family planning methods. They have access to all civic amenities and government development programmes.

P.B.S.V. PADMANABHAM

Siruthali Maravar

The Siruthali Maravar are also known as Siruthali Katti Maravar and Singampatti Maravar. The word '*siruthali*' in Tamil means a small *thali* — and, in fact, their women wear a smaller *thali* compared to other Maravar subgroups. The term Singampatti refers to the seat of the Siruthali Maravar's chief who is called Singampatti or Samir Singampatti. To this day, the ex-zamindar of Singampatti is considered the indisputable leader of the Siruthali Maravar. Dumont (1963) mentions that the Siruthali Maravar settled around Chokkampatti are synonymously called Segakottai Maravar. It appears that they are the same as the Sega Maravar mentioned in the *Maravar Charitram* (Kulandaivelu Swamy and Udaiyar Thevar, 1938). According to some records, they were also once called Kottali Maravar. Another version says that among the Siruthali Maravar there was a line called Kottali Maravar, who were more or less identical with Servai, a community that they intermarry with. They are also known as Koltheri Mulatha Maravar and Vannikkottai Maravar (Dumont, 1963). Their history can be traced back to the 12th Century when the Sethupathis were displaced by the Chola rulers. A vassal of the Sethupathis, one Apodarana Thevar, left the country with his subjects. Apodarana reached Cape Comorin and, in search of new pastures, settled in a part of the Western Ghats that reached from Cape Comorin to the Sathur *zamindari*. Apodarana's great-granddaughter, after a rift with her husband, left his settlement in Devanalloor to seek refuge in Singampatti which was then ruled by a community called the Valliar. The Valliar chief, having no male heir, adopted her son Preetibalu as his successor. Later, Preetibalu reunited with his patrilineal relations in Devanalloor to defeat the resistance to his being seated on the throne of Singampatti. Later, under the Nayak rulers of Madurai, Singampatti was declared one of the 72 *palayams* of the former Pandya kingdom and, in 1802, the *palayams* were converted into *zamindaris*. The *zamindari* system has been abolished in independent India, but the present descendant of Preetibalu is still considered their leader. Today, the Siruthali Maravar

are distributed from Cape Comorin to Sathur. The area falls under the Kanniyakumari, Tirunelveli and Kamarajar Districts on the edges of the Western Ghats. They speak Tamil and use the Tamil script. Those settled in the Kanniyakumari District can speak Malayalam. The small *thalis* worn by the Siruthali Maravar women serves as an identification mark.

The Siruthali Maravar are nonvegetarian, but do not eat beef or pork. Rice is their staple food, supplemented by *ragi* and millet. They also eat pulses and seasonal vegetables. Milk and milk products are consumed. Men take alcoholic drinks. They smoke *beedis* and cigarettes, chew betel leaves and arecanuts, and use snuff.

The Siruthali Maravar are not divided into exogamous or endogamous groups. The zamindar's family follows more Sanskritic customs and has close links with the royal family of the Sembinattu Maravar and with royal families elsewhere. The only divisions among them are the *sambandakarar* and *chokkarar*, who can be called affines and kin respectively. The *chokkarar* cannot marry within themselves, but can marry with the *sambandakarar*. The Siruthali Maravar consider themselves to be Kshatriyas in the *varna* order. During life-cycle rituals, their males wear a sacred thread, which is taken to be a Kshatriya custom.

Till some years ago, the Siruthali Maravar largely used to marry among themselves. Nowadays they intermarry with the other Maravar subgroups. The Siruthali Maravar men and women marry after they cross the age of 20 and 18 years respectively. The mother's brother's daughter and father's sister's daughter, particularly the latter, are the preferred alliances. Unlike in many Maravar groups, they allow uncle-niece marriage. Besides the prescriptive alliances, mates are acquired through negotiation. Monogamy is the norm, but polygynous unions, especially to beget children, are also reported. Levirate and sororate are permitted. Toe-rings and *thali* are the marriage symbols of women. Bride-price as well as dowry are paid. After marriage, the residence is patrilocal. Divorce is permitted and divorcees, widows and widowers can remarry. On divorce, a heavy compensation is given to the aggrieved spouse.

Most Siruthali Maravar live in joint families. However, nuclear families are now on the increase. Parents-in-law are the avoidance relations, cross-cousins and wife's younger siblings are the joking relations. Male equigeniture is the rule of inheritance and the eldest son succeeds to his father's position.

Siruthali Maravar women do not have the right to inherit parental property except if the woman's mother has some. They participate in economic and religious activities on an equal footing with their men. They have a role in family management and decision-making.

During the course of the seventh or ninth month of a Siruthali Maravar woman's first pregnancy, her relatives (usually women) come to her affinal home to perform the pre-delivery ritual called *valaikappu* or *seemantham*. On this occasion, the woman is fed with five or seven kinds of cooked rice and sweets. She is also given new bangles and, if they can afford it, jewellery. The first delivery takes place in the natal home of the woman. After delivery, on the same day, the child is bathed and the mother is given a purificatory bath on the third or fifth day. The child is given to taste *senai* (a few drops of milk or honey or sugar solution) before it is suckled. On the 16th day after delivery, the old pots in the house are replaced by new ones, the house is cleaned and a *sadangu* is observed. On this occasion, relatives are feasted. The child is named on this occasion. It is customary to name a boy after his grandfather. The tonsuring ceremony is usually performed after one year and on the next day the child's earlobes are pierced.

Upon attaining menarche, a Siruthali Maravar girl is secluded for five days and then given a purificatory bath. On the 16th day, a *sadangu* is arranged. The maternal uncle bears the expenses and he has to bring a goat for the feast. The betrothal (*nichayathartham*) ceremony which precedes a marriage is an important occasion in which *parisam* is paid to the bride-to-be. Indeed, the payment of *parisam* is considered more important than the actual marriage solemnisation. On the day of betrothal, the marriage date is formally fixed. On the marriage day, after some household rituals, the *thali,* blessed by those present, is tied around the bride's neck — the first knot is tied by the bridegroom and the second and third knots by

his sister. The marriage is consummated on an auspicious day, usually after the third month.

A death among the Siruthali Maravar entails the performance of many rituals. The firstborn, unless they die as infants, are cremated. Others are either buried or cremated. The eldest son performs the *kolli* act. If a pregnant woman dies, the foetus is removed before burial or cremation. In case of a bachelor's death, a *thali* is tied to a plaintain tree before the trunk is cut — this ritual symbolically signifies marriage. The mortuary ritual, *karumathi*, is performed on the 16th day, when the departed soul is offered *sradh*. On the 17th day, relatives are fed a nonvegetarian feast.

The Siruthali Maravar are a landowning agriculturalist community. They are also engaged in business and trade, services and other professions.

The hereditary Siruthali Maravar community leaders, called *nattanmai*, settle all disputes. The Singampatti zamindar arbitrates on request. The *nattanmais* are also responsible for organising religious activities, such as arranging the *kuladevi* festival. Some of them are members of the Maravar and Mukkulathor caste associations.

The Siruthali Maravar are Hindus. They worship family deities such as Surimuthu Ayyanar, Mahalingaswamy, Dalavai Madaswamy and Durimadaswamy. Regional deities, such as Murugan and Pillaiyar, are also worshipped. Adi Amavasai and Panguni Uttaram are some of their important festivals. Palani, Kanniyakumari and Rameswaram are their sacred centres. The Brahman are their sacred specialists.

The Siruthali Maravar take food and water from high ranking communities like the Brahman and the Vellalar. Exchange of food and water is allowed with the Thevar communities. The zamindar family has connubial ties with the Sembinattu Maravar. In recent years, there has been an all-round sense of horizontal solidarity which has led to connubial ties across the different Maravar subgroups as well as Mukkulathor groups. Patron-client ties with the Achari, Tachan, Pallan and other such communities are maintained.

The Siruthali Maravar favour formal education for their children. They prefer modern medicare to indigenous medi-

cine. The family welfare programme has been well received by them. Governmental programmes are utilised.

P.B.S.V. PADMANABHAM

Vanniya Maravar

The Vanniya Maravar are also known as Kannitthu Maravar, Vannikottai Maravar or Vannikattu Maravar and Vannikotthu Maravar. Nowadays, they prefer to call themselves Vanniyar or Agnikula Kshatriya Vanniyar. Dumont's (1963) information equates Vannikottai Maravar with the Kottali Maravar, but there are differing opinions as to the identity of the Vanniya Maravar or Kottali Maravar. Dumont (1963) and others equate the Kottali Maravar with the Siruthali Maravar. This confusion cannot be cleared even by the Vanniya Maravar, indeed, now it appears that they align themselves with the Vanniyar of the North Arcot Ambedkar and South Arcot Districts. They are located in and around Sivagiri. Kadhirvelu (1977) mentions the Elayiram Pannai and Alagapuri and Sivagiri Palayams (*zamindaris*) as belonging to the Vanniya Maravar before the abolition of *zamindari* in 1952. Their identification with the Agnikula Vanniya Kshatriya or Vanniyar started forty or fifty years back. Despite their identification with the Vanniyar of the North and South Arcot Districts, they call themselves Vanniya Maravar. So their identity and shifting alignments pose complications. They are believed to have migrated from Madurai to settle in 18 or so villages in and around Sivagiri on the orders of a Pandya king of Madurai. They speak Tamil, and use its script.

The Vanniya Maravar are nonvegetarian, but do not eat beef or pork. Some of them are vegetarian. Rice is their staple food. They also eat different pulses and like seasonal vegetables. Milk and milk product consumption is only moderate. Some men take alcoholic drinks. Cigarette- and *beedi*-smoking and chewing tobacco with betel leaves and arecanuts is common. Some of the men use snuff.

The Vanniya Maravar are not divided into any endogamous

or exogamous divisions. Except for the *chokkarar* and *sambandakarar* groups, no concrete social divisions are found among them. Their men and women suffix Samy and Thai to their personal names. They consider themselves Kshatriyas in the *varna* order. Though they align themselves with the Vanniyar, marital alliances are not forged with them. Despite being a subgroup of the Maravar, they do not marry even with other Maravar subgroups.

The Vanniya Maravar are endogamous. Mother's brother's daughter and father's sister's daughter are the preferred spouses. Other alliances are negotiated. The marriageable age for men and women are above 20 and 18 years respectively. Monogamy is the norm; polygyny, however, is allowed in special cases. Junior sororate is allowed. Toe-rings and *thali* are the symbols of marriage for women. A nominal bride-price (*parisam*) is customarily paid, but of late dowry is demanded and paid. After marriage the residence is patrilocal. Only in a family with no male heir is the son-in-law expected to reside in his wife's natal home. Divorce is not allowed. In case of incompatibility between spouses, they prefer to live separately without a formal divorce. In such cases, the male may opt for another marriage, though this is not encouraged. Widow marriage is not allowed but a widower can remarry.

Most Vanniya Maravar live in joint families. However, nuclear families are now reportedly on the rise. Male equigeniture is the rule of inheritance and the eldest son succeeds as the head of family.

Vanniya Maravar women, besides doing the household chores, engage in wage-earning pursuits in agricultural and nonagricultural activities. Women are entitled to inherit paternal property. They contribute to family income, participate in family management and their consent is sought when familial decisions are taken. But they do not participate in the social control mechanism.

During the seventh or ninth month of her first pregnancy, a Vanniya Maravar woman's relatives (usually female) visit her to perform the *valaikappu* ritual and take her to her natal home for delivery. Birth pollution lasts for 16 days. Three months after the delivery, the woman returns to her husband's

home with the child. In the sixth month, not before or later, the infant is fed for the first time with *chakkarai pongal* (a sweet rice preparation that is a soft solid), a weaning food. Piercing of the ear and tonsuring are the two important rituals performed for a child. On these occasions, the maternal uncle bears the expenses.

Upon attaining menarche, a Vanniya Maravar girl is kept secluded for five days. The *sadangu* is observed on the 16th day or in the seventh month. If the maternal uncle has a son of marriageable age, he is encouraged to marry the cross-cousin one year after her attaining menarche.

A Vanniya Maravar wedding is preceded by a betrothal (*nichayathartam*) arranged at the residence of the bride-to-be. On this occasion, the bride is given gifts, including clothes, vessels, fruits and flowers, and the *parisam* amount. The wedding takes place either at the bride's or bridegroom's residence. The tying of the *thirumangalyam* (*thali*) is the most important wedding ritual.

When a Vanniya Maravar dies, the body is immediately bathed and dressed in clothes. After the arrival of the relatives, and before the body is taken away, it is bathed again with water specifically brought for the purpose. Death rites are similar to those of other Maravar groups.

Most Vanniya Maravar own some agricultural land and are cultivators. Most of them own irrigated lands, but there are also dry land cultivators among them. Child labour is reported. Some of the Vanniya Maravar are employed in government service and in cement factories nearby. Others are masons. A few have entered professional services and business. Except where patron-client ties are in existence, the mode of exchange and transactions are in cash.

In rural areas, a *nattammai*, a hereditary position, oversees all matters of the Vanniya Maravar community, including dispute adjudication and arrangement of religious functions. The Vanniya Maravar do not enrol in the larger horizontal solidarity associations of either the Maravar or the Vanniyar.

The Vanniya Maravar are Hindus. Meenakshi Amman is their patron deity, but every Vanniya Maravar family has a family deity, who is worshipped on all important occasions and during

family cycle rituals. Ayyanar, Alaganchi Amman and Balasubramanyaswamy are some of their deities. Panguni Uttaram, Theppa Thiruvizha, Pongal, Adi and Deepavali are some of the important festivals celebrated by them. The Meenakshi Amman temple in Madurai, the Ayyanar temple in Sippiparai and the Murugan temple in Tiruchendur are some of their sacred centres.

The traditional Vanniya Maravar identity has now been changed due to their assertive alignment with the Vanniyar. However, they have no connubial ties either with the other Maravar groups or with the Vanniyar. They exchange food and water with the different subgroups of the Maravar, Agamudaiyar and Kallar as well as with the Nadar, Pillai and others. The Pallan, Parayan, Chakkiliyan and other such communities take food and water from them and maintain cultivator-labour or patron-client relationships. In the past, a Chakkiliyan used to carry death messages for them, but nowadays they perform this function by themselves. The Parayan drummers are called in for such occasions as death. A Brahman performs their marriage ceremonies. Services of the Ambattan and other service castes are utilised, usually for a payment in kind.

The Vanniya Maravar favour formal education for their children. However, many children drop out due to socio-economic reasons. They prefer modern medicare. Their women opt for modern family planning methods. Governmental programmes and all civic amenities are available to them.

P. ADITI (MUKHERJEE)

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MARUTHUVAR

Barbers of Tamil Nadu are also called Maruthuvar, a word derived from the Tamil *marunthu*, meaning medicine. Ambattan, Navithar and Pranopakari are synonyms of Maruthuvar. Pandithar is the title used by their men. There are Telugu-speaking barbers in Tamil Nadu called the Mangala and Malayalam-speaking barbers called the Vilakkathalai Nair and Kavuthiyan. But the traditionally Tamil-speaking barbers do not have marital alliances with these groups. The Maruthuvar community is found all over Tamil Nadu. Regarding their origin, Thurston (1909), quoting Manu's verses, says that "from a Brahmana with the daughter of a Vaisya is born a son called an Ambashtha". They are natives of the state. In 1931 census, they were enumerated under various names and the population figures were: Ambattan (10,242 persons), Maruthuvan (152 persons), Nasuvan (404 persons), Navithan (102,915 persons), Navutiyan (1,013 persons), Pandithan (3,914 persons) and Pariyari (15,238 persons).

They speak Tamil and use Tamil script. The Maruthuvar are non-vegetarian, but avoid pork and beef. Rice, *ragi* and millets are their staple food. They consume all pulses, vegetables, fruits and roots available locally. They use groundnut or gingelly oils for cooking. The Maruthuvar drink coffee and tea. The men take alcoholic drinks occasionally. Milk and milk products are consumed. Men smoke beedis and cigarette and some use snuff. Both men and women chew betel leaves. In the Backward classes Commission's Report (1974), it was stated that there were four divisions amongst the Maruthuvar in some districts. There were known as Satti, Vaduga, Valangai and Edangai Ambattans and served particular communities. Some served the Vellala Gounder exclusively.

The Maruthuvar observe endogamy at the community level, but do not marry a kin other than a sister's daughter or mother's brother's daughter or father's sister's daughter. The girls are married after they are 18 years of age and boys when they are 25. Marriages are usually settled by elders through negotiations. Normally they practise monogamy. The *thali* and

toe-rings are the symbols of marriage. Bride-price, called *pariyam,* is given. Concept of *kanyadan* exists among them. Patrilocal residence is followed. A widower or a male divorcee can remarry, but not a widow or a female divorcee. Sons inherit the property and the eldest son succeeds his father.

The Maruthuvar women are expert midwives in villages and attend on deliveries, irrespective of the caste of the pregnant woman. They also contribute to the family income.

The Maruthuvar observe rituals like *valaikappau* and *seemantham* during the ninth month of the first pregnancy of a married woman. Gifts like a sari, blouse, fruits, sweets and glass bangles are given to the pregnant woman by her parents. After the childbirth, the mother and child are considered polluted for eight days. On the ninth day, both are given ceremonial baths, signifying termination of pollution. On the same day, the elderly women of the family name the child. At the age of three or five, the tonsuring ceremony is performed and the child's ears are pricked with gold-wires given by its maternal grandparents.

As soon as a Maruthuvar girl attains puberty, her maternal uncle's family is informed. He erects an enclosure within the living premises with plaited green coconut leaves. The girl is bathed, dressed well and kept in seclusion in this hut. They observe pollution for five days, during which the girl is given some gingelly oil with a beaten egg mixed with it every early morning. After that, she is given special foods like *puttu* (steamed rice flour mixed with sugar or jaggery and coconut). On the sixth day, the hut is dismantled and burnt. The girl is given a purificatory bath and is dressed in a new sari brought by her maternal uncle's family. All married women perform *arati* (a lighted lamp kept in a plate) before her, after applying *kumkum,* turmeric and sandal paste on her forehead and cheeks. A vegetarian feast is given to all those attending the function.

The Maruthuvar fix the marriage on the betrothal ceremony day. The marriage takes place at the bridegroom's residence. On the day of marriage, the bride and bridegroom sit on the planks of wood on the dais. The Brahman priest lights the sacred fire, *homam,* and ties the *kankanam* (yellow thread) on the right wrist of the bridegroom. The bridegroom in turn ties a *kankanam* on the right wrist of the bride. At the end

of the marriage rituals, these are removed. Soon after tying the *kankanam*, there is the tying of the *thali*. After the *thali*-tying, the couple are taken to the village tank or to the well. There the couple sow some sprouts and then return home. The consummation ceremony is held at bride's residence on the next day.

As soon as a member of a Maruthuvar family dies, the village Thoti (from the Parayan community) is asked to convey the news to all the relatives. He is given some paddy and a quarter rupee by each family for this service. When he returns to the village, he goes to the burial ground of the Maruthuvar and digs the pit for burial. The dead body is bathed and covered with a white shroud. A bier is made for carrying the corpse. Two new pots are obtained from the village potter, one to carry water in, and the other for fire. The chief mourners, the sons carry these pots and male relatives carry the bier. At the entrance to the burial ground, the bier is placed on the ground for some time and hired professionals sing dirges in praise of the dead and King Harichandra and request him to allow them to take the body inside the burial ground. They observe *nadappu* on 15th day, when the widow removes her *thali* on this day. Death pollution is observed for 15 days and is terminated by performing *punvavachanam*. A non-vegetarian feast is offered to all those gathered on this day. During the Tamil month *Purattasi* (September–October) they conduct ancestral worship.

The Maruthuvar are professional barbers. Some of the men are also musicians who play *nadaswaram* (pipe) and *thavil* (drum) at marriages and other ceremonies and festivities. Their women are expert midwives. Some of the educated boys and girls, have taken up white collar jobs, Some members of this community have been practising Sidda medicine for generations. In rural areas, Maruthuvar families who serve the local temples as musicians have got *manya* land, land to cultivate and enjoy the yield.

As there are hardly one or two families belonging to the Maruthuvar community in each village, they do not have organised caste councils. The family elders usually look into any differences that may come up between family members.

If they are unable to settle the dispute, then they approach the caste headman whom they serve.

The Maruthuvar visit all temples of the Hindu deities. Some of them play musical instruments at these temples. But their most important deities are Katteri and Muneeswarar. They worship these deities once a year during the Tamil month of *Aadi* (July-August). For some rituals, like ear-boring, puberty rites and *nadappu,* their own community members officiate. But to perform *punyavachanam,* marriage and *karyadan* rituals, they use the services of the local Brahman priest. Pongal and Deepavali are the important festivals they celebrate.

The Maruthuvar accept water and cooked food from all communities of the village except communities such as the Parayan, Jogi, and Vannan. They have their own cremation or burial ground in rural areas. They visit and participate in traditional festivals. Their services are considered essential during these festivals and they maintain a patronclient relationship with other communities.

The Maruthuvar community has whitecollar job-holders, teachers, engineers and doctors. They now send their sons and daughters to schools and colleges. They favour both traditional medicare as well as modern medicare. They welcome family planning. They enjoy all civic amenities.

Some of them have availed of loans under the IRDP schemes to set up modern hair-dressing saloons.

RAJALAKSHMI MISRA

Maruthuvar Christian

The Maruthuvar are traditional barbers, whose name has been derived from *marunthu* (medicine). Ambattan, Kudimakan, Navidan and Nasuvan are synonyms for the Maruthuvar. Some use the word Pandithar also. Barbers can broadly be classified into three different endogamous groups: barbers who serve the higher castes such as the Brahman and the Vellalar, barbers who serve the Scheduled Castes such as the Parayan and the Pallan and barbers who serve only a particular caste and not any other, for example, the barbers of the Nadar. Further,

being a service caste group, there are only two or three families of this caste in each village. So it is very difficult to find a Christian family. Generally, the Maruthuvar Christian are those who have been converted to Christianity along with the group of people whom they serve. The Maruthuvar Christian have not been enumerated separately. Their mother tongue is Tamil. They are mostly distributed in the Kanniyakumari, Tirunelveli and Chidambaranar Districts where the Christian population is relatively more and mass conversions have taken place, especially among the Nadar and Scheduled Castes. The Maruthuvar Christian are the barber group who serve the Nadar both Hindus and Christians. Traditional ayurvedic doctors have been referred to in literature either as Maruthuvar or Vaidhiyar. But they are not from the barber community. The barbers are referred to as Maruthuvar because they too have some knowledge of herbal medicine. The Maruthuvar women act as rural midwives (*maruttuvachi*).

The Maruthuvar Christian are nonvegetarian, who eat pork. Their staple foods are rice, millets and *ragi*. They consume all kinds of locally available pulses, vegetables, fruits, roots, greens and tubers. Consumption of milk and milk products is rare. The cooking medium is groundnut oil and gingelly oil. They drink coffee. They chew betel. Some men smoke cigarettes and *beedis*.

Social division among the Maruthuvar Christian is based on the caste whom they serve. Those who serve the Nadar have the following seven exogamous *kilai* (clan): Patthu (ten), Pakku (arecanut), Periya (big), Alli (water lily), Chakravarti (emperor), Kilavi (old woman) and Kaliyan. They were further divided according to inheritance rules, as *makkalthayam* (patrilineal) and *marumakkalthayam* (matrilineal). In the *makkalthayam* group the parental property is shared by the own sons while in the *marumakkalthayam* group the property is shared by the sister's sons. The *marumakkalthayam* practice has now disappeared and only *makkalthayam* is practised.

Maruthuvar Christian women are respected and consulted in every family activity. Daughters are now being educated and some of them are in white-collar jobs. Some women work as casual labour to support the family economically. They attend to deliveries in their clients' houses. They do all the domestic

work and take part in social and religious activities. Women do not have decision-making powers but their suggestions are taken. They have a secondary status compared to the men.

There are both nuclear and joint families among the Maruthuvar Christian. There is no avoidance relationship; joking relationships exist between brothers-in-law and sisters-in-law. After marriage, the sons live for a few years with their parents, then establish separate homes. When sons want to live separately, the father allots some of his clients to them so that they can earn their livelihood. The parental properties are divided among the sons after the death of the parents or after the marriage of all the sons and daughters. In their old age, the parents live with their sons. The households (clients) served by the father are shared among the sons. The eldest son succeeds as the head of the family after the death of his father. If the children are minors, the widow herself acts as the head of the family and her brothers and her husband's brothers help her.

The first delivery is arranged in the Maruthuvar Christian woman's natal home. During the seventh or ninth month of her pregnancy, the woman's parents arrange for a small feast for their daughter's relatives in her house. The pregnant woman is presented with bangles. After the feast, she is taken to her parents' house. The delivery is attended by an experienced woman from their caste or the mother. Some of them now go to maternity homes for delivery. The newborn is given palm-jaggery water (*cenai*). Pollution is observed for one month. The child is baptised in church when it is one month old. It is also named on this day. Tonsuring is not compulsory. Roman Catholics arrange the tonsuring in any one of the holy shrines of St.Antony, St.Xavier or in the church at Velankanni. Children attend Bible classes for one month when they are 12-15. Then they are given Communion. Generally, the maternal uncle gives them new clothes on this day.

Upon attaining her menarche, the Maruthuvar Christian girl is given a special bath on the same day or on the third day by her maternal uncle's wife. Pollution is observed for 16 days and during this period the girl sits secluded in a corner of the house and an iron implement is kept by her side. The

washerwoman supplies clothes to the girl during the pollution period. The clothes that the girl wore on the day of attaining puberty are given to the washerwoman. The puberty ceremony is arranged on the 16th day. On this day, the girl is given a bath by her aunts. After the bath, she wears the sari given to her by her maternal uncle. A small feast is arranged by the girl's father to visiting relatives and the relatives either give gifts to the girl or pay *moi* money to her father.

Marriages are arranged by the parents through negotiation. Generally the Maruthuvar Christian boys are married at the age of 21-25 years, and girls 16-20 years. The *thali* is the marriage symbol. Marriages are conducted in the church near the girl's home, with the priest of the church officiating. They neither demand dowry nor pay bride-price. But some people have started demanding dowry in the form of ornaments and cash. A man can marry his mother's brother's daughter, father's sister's daughter or his sister's daughter. But in some places they do not marry the sister's daughter. They are a patrilocal and patrilineal society. The parental property is shared equally by the sons. Divorce and widow remarriage are not allowed. But a widower can remarry. He can marry the younger sister of his deceased wife. Monogamy is strictly followed. The marriage proposal is initiated by the boy's parents who contact the girl's parents. The betrothal ceremony is arranged in the girl's house. The boy's father presents a betrothal sari, blouse piece, coconut, flowers, fruits and betel leaves. The plate containing the betrothal sari is exchanged by the maternal uncles of the boy and the girl and the marriage is confirmed. Then the girl wears the betrothal sari and the elders bless her. The girl's father gives a small feast to the invitees. After the betrothal ceremony the marriage news is conveyed to the church and the banns are announced continuously for three weeks. This is called *arikkai vasithal*. After the *thali*-tying ceremony in church, the bride and bridegroom are taken in procession to the bride's house. A feast is arranged by the boy's and girl's parents and the relatives pay *moi*. The consummation ceremony is at the bride's place and the girl's father arranges for a nonvegetarian feast.

The Maruthuvar Christian dead are buried. The body is

bathed and kept in sitting position in a corner of the house. A small *pandal* is erected in front of the house. All the relatives are informed. The villagers are informed by the tolling of the church bell. But in the case of suicides, the bell does not toll nor are prayers conducted, nor is the body buried in the common burial ground. The Samban makes a bier of wooden poles and digs the grave. They do not perform the *kolli* ceremony and the sons do not shave their heads. On the third day, they offer milk to the departed soul and erect a cross on the grave. Special prayers are conducted in the house, in the church and at the burial ground. They have got a separate burial ground, which is utilised by Christians belonging to different castes. In villages where the Christian population is not considerable, they bury their dead in the wasteland. In towns, a cart is available in the church to carry the dead. Some bury their dead in a coffin. On the 16th day, they arrange for the death ceremony. On this day the sons are presented with new clothes by their relatives. In case of the death of the husband, the widow removes her *thali* on this day. Generally, widows have to wear white saris only, but some have now started wearing coloured saris.

As a service caste group, the annual payment that the Maruthuvar Christian receive from their customers is their main source of income. During death ceremonies they are paid in cash for their services. In addition they collect offerings at the time of *vaikkarisi* (rice offered to the dead). Their wives attend on childbirths and they get some money and a sari for this service. The womenfolk work as casual labourers to support the family. Some of the educated persons are in white-collar jobs as teachers and administrators. In rural areas, they get food from their customers, both morning and evening, and are paid in cash and kind annually during the harvest.

The Maruthuvar Christian do not have any caste panchayat of their own and disputes are settled by the elders of the community they serve.

The Maruthuvar Christian belong to different Christian denominations. Marriage between persons belonging to different denominations is permitted. Marriage between a Hindu and Christian is allowed, provided the partner converts to

Christianity. Christmas, New Year's Day, Palm Sunday, Easter and the celebrations at the local shrines are their major festivals.

The Maruthuvar Christian are a service caste. The washerman who serves the community they serve washes their clothes. They fetch water from the common well used by the caste whom they serve and use their burial ground.

The Maruthuvar Christian now educate their children. Their attitude to modern family planning programmes is favourable. Many of them are now taking up semi-skilled jobs, such as tailoring or moving to towns and establishing haircutting saloons, for which they avail of loan facilities from the nationalised and cooperative banks. They have access to all civic amenities.

S. MANOHARAN

MARWARI

The term Marwari is derived from the Marwar region of Rajasthan. The Marwari, who belong to a merchant community, have earned a name in the commercial sphere. The Marwari community is identified at the national level.

Many endogamous units exist in the Marwari community and among them the Maheshwari, Agarwal and Oswal are prominent. The Marwari migrated from their native Rajasthan as the barren fields did not present opportunities for agriculture or trade. The Marwari, who were functionally specialised in trade, moved to areas where trade opportunities were to be found, particularly to those areas where a sort of commercial vacuum existed and where the indigenous population was neither well organised nor endowed with the requisites to exploit new trading opportunities opened up by the British Raj. As a result, at the end of the 18th Century, the Marwari, mainly composed of Oswal and Maheshwari from the Jodhpur, Bikaner and Shekhavati regions, migrated to Malwa and several important cities in India. They migrated to South India, particularly to Madras, in the last quarter of the 19th Century. Among the Marwari population which migrated from the various districts of Rajasthan to Madras, most were Oswal. By profession the Oswal are moneylenders and traders.

The language spoken by the Marwari is Marwari. The Marwari converse in Hindi and English with other communities. They have also adopted the regional language and many speak Tamil fluently. They use the Devanagari and Roman scripts.

The Marwari wear a distinctive dress which can be identified easily. Men wear kurta, pyjama or dhoti and a Rajputana type of turban. The style of the turban differs according to the region from which a man comes. The Marwari man, while going out, usually wears a jacket called *badan* or a cotton coat called *angarkha,* which comes down .to the knees. Marwari women dress in colourful clothes. They usually wear a *lehanga* (loose, long skirt), *choli* (blouse) and a broad, bright-coloured *odhni* (upper cloth).

The Marwari are vegetarian. Some of them even avoid onions

and garlic. They consume a lot of vegetables and a number of pulses. Wheat is their staple food. Rice and *bajra* are also eaten. They use mustard oil, groundnut oil and ghee for cooking. They consume all roots and tubers which are locally available. They eat all kinds of fruit. They consume milk and milk products. They drink coffee and tea. Though alcoholic drinks is not approved, some of the affluent Marwari consume such drinks occasionally. During festivals *bhang* (opium) is consumed. The Marwari smoke cigarettes and *beedis* and chew tobacco and betel. They also use snuff.

Social divisions exist among the Marwari. They have subcastes which are further subdivided into various *gotras*. While the members of the different *gotras* eat together and intermarry; the members of the same *gotra* cannot intermarry. The Agarwal have 18 *gotras* and restrict persons of the same *gotra* from marrying, a custom strictly adhered to even today. These *gotras* are supposed to have been derived from 18 leading families of Agrohs which are believed to have been instituted by Maharaja Agrasen. Similarly, among the Maheshwari, *gotras* and sub-*gotras* exist. The different *gotras* among the Marwari have several surnames, such as Gupta, Goyal, Goenka, Birla, Bajaj, Sharma, Modi and Kothari. Members of Maheshwari and Agarwal *gotras* can intermarry, but marriage with the Oswal is not allowed. The Marwari are aware of the *varna* system. The Agarwal, Oswal and Maheshwari together constitute the Vysya.

The Marwari are endogamous at the community level, but marriage in the same *gotra* is forbidden. In the past, there were no intermarriages between the different castes of Marwari, *viz.* Agarwal, Oswal and Maheshwari, and even marriages between similar groups such as the Oswal and Poswal (both of whom are Jains claiming Rajput descent) were prohibited, but such restrictions are breaking down today.

Among the Marwari, marriage is arranged by an individual's parents. Marriage by courtship and mutual consent is recognised only if it is within the Marwari community. Great importance is attached to the kin group in taking decisions about marital alliances so as to ensure caste endogamy. This is important because it facilitates acceptance of the bride by all concerned. Widower remarriage is permitted, whereas widow remarriage

is not. Similarly, while a divorced woman is not allowed to remarry, a divorced man can get married.

Vermilion, glass, ivory and gold bangles, *mangalasutra, bindi, bhor* (a round jewel made of gold and precious stones and worn on the forehead), earrings, nose-ring or nose-stud, toe-rings and silver anklets are considered symbols of marriage for a Marwari woman, and these are observed strictly. In many families, a woman after marriage has to cover her head and face with her sari *pallu*.

The custom of dowry is prevalent among the Marwari and is paid in huge amounts. The accepted mode of residence among the Marwari is patrilocal and neolocal. Joint families are more common than nuclear families. A majority of Marwari families run business ventures jointly. Nowadays, there has been a slow increase in the formation of nuclear families among them but the extended family system is more common.

Among the Marwari, the purdah (veil) is still observed and women are not allowed to enter the men's section in their own homes. A daughter-in-law should never approach her mother-in-law without covering her face or speak to her without the presence of intermediaries. An avoidance relationship exists between a daughter-in-law and her father-in-law, between a woman and her husband's elder brother, between son-in-law and mother-in-law. A joking relationship exists between grandparents and grandchildren, maternal uncle and nephews and nieces, and between a woman and her husband's younger brother. Similarly, a man can have joking relations with his wife's younger sister.

Among the Marwari, marriage is a sacrament and, so, divorce occurs very rarely, even though it is sanctioned. Divorce brings shame upon the families concerned. The Marwari, who follow Hindu law, are allowed to take more than one wife if the first marriage is incompatible. But divorce is not approved except under unavoidable circumstances. Either spouse has the right to initiate divorce on grounds of adultery, barrenness, change of religion, impotence, chronic sickness, cruelty, insanity, renunciation of the world and failure to have a male issue. If a husband seeks divorce, he has to pay compensation to his wife. The custody of the children will be decided by the court.

The Marwari family, which is based on a patrilocal and patrilineal pattern, follows the Hindu law of inheritance which allows only males to inherit. After the death of the father, the eldest son succeeds to the position of his father as head of the family.

Marwari women are dependent on men and subordinate to them. Women do not contribute to the family income. It is uncommon for a woman in a Marwari family to accept employment outside the home. A woman may work outside the home if she is a widow and has no one to look after her.

When a Marwari woman is pregnant for the first time, various ceremonies are performed at the husband's home during the fifth and seventh months. Before the pregnant woman goes to her parents' house for confinement, her mother-in-law performs a brief puja, after which the woman and her husband pray to the family deity. The woman remains in her parents' home till the child is three or four months old. Post-delivery pollution is observed. When the child is three months old, the naming ceremony is held. Usually, the name of the child is chosen by the child's paternal grandparents. The tonsuring ceremony is conducted only for male children. When a boy reaches adolescence, the thread wearing (*janeu*) ceremony is performed.

Marriage takes place at the bride's house. The bridegroom, dressed in brocade or silk *sherwani* (long coat), tight pyjama and a turban, arrives on horseback holding a sword. He is accompanied by his relatives and friends in this *barat* (procession) to the bride's house. The bride is also dressed grandly, in traditional Marwari style. Her hands and feet are decorated in beautiful floral patterns with *mehndi* (henna). It is customary for other women also to decorate their hands with henna during the wedding, as well as on all festive occasions.

When the Marwari bridegroom arrives at his bride's home, the bride's parents receive him and wash his feet with milk, curd, honey, sugar and ghee. After the preliminary rituals are completed, an elaborate main ceremony takes place. Among the Oswal and the Maheshwari, the maternal uncle has to carry the bride four times around the bridegroom before placing her on the bridegroom's left. After the wedding rites are

completed, games such as fishing for a ring in a pot of milk or untying the knot on a *rakhi* (a coloured thread tied round the wrist) are played. When the couple join hands for the first time, the mother-in-law places freshly ground *mehndi* (henna) in them. After the wedding is over, the bridegroom returns to his house with his bride. As he enters the house, he has to push aside seven plates which are kept in a line. The bride follows in the steps of her husband, gently picking up the plates one by one, making as little noise as possible in the process. This symbolises her desire to merge quietly into her husband's household. Among the Marwari, a bride has to wear ivory bangles for two years or at least for forty days and during this period she must take care not to break these bangles.

Generally, when an Agarwal or Oswal dies, the deceased's sons shave their heads. But among the Maheshwari, sons, grandsons and greatgrandsons on both the paternal and maternal sides have their heads shaved. The dead are cremated and the bones are disposed of either in the sea or in a river. Ancestor worship is observed.

The Marwari settled in Tamil Nadu are predominantly a mercantile community. Business and industry are the chief occupations of the community. The Marwari exercise economic domination over other communities. They are bankers and moneylenders and owners of leading business organisations. Most of the business centres in Madras, like George Town, are the strongholds of the community today. While the community has produced numerous renowned businessmen and industrialists, it has also produced a number of eminent educationists, scientists, engineers, politicians, doctors and scholars.

The Marwari favour formal education for their children. Marwari girls who were once denied the privilege of having formal education are now going to college and some have studied further and become professionals.

The Marwari have associations or *sabhas* to promote trade and industry. These *sabhas* also exercise social control over their members. The Maheshwari *sabha* in Madras does useful work in the fields of education, music, medical relief, sports and entertainment. It has established many trusts for distributing scholarships.

The Maheshwari are basically Hindus but many of them have embraced Jainism. The Marwari are very orthodox in outlook and, even with changing times, have retained their religious traditions and customs. They are very religious-minded and visit all places of pilgrimage. The Marwari visit Hardwar for a ritual bath in the Ganga. Sringeri, Puri, Kedarnath and Dwarka are considered their sacred centres.

Marwari women observe many fasts and celebrate many festivals with great enthusiasm. The Baditeej is one such festival celebrated by women on the third of the Vikram Samvat year, when they fast and pray for the longevity of their husbands. Unmarried girls pray in anticipation of good husbands. On the third day of *Chaitra*, another festival called Gorja or Gavraja is celebrated by both married and unmarried girls. On this day, they worship Siva and Parvathi. Jayastha Shuklaa is celebrated as Mahesh Navami among the Maheshwari and Mahesh is worshipped. This festival also commemorates the birth of the Maheshwari community. The other important festivals celebrated by the Marwari are Deepavali, Holi, Rakhi, Dussehra and Teej.

Marwari women sing folk-songs during festivals, weddings and other ceremonial occasions. The Marwari have an interest in classical music and Western music.

The Marwari maintain only business relations with other communities. Sometimes they exchange food with other communities. Intercommunity marriages are forbidden. But through business and professional services, the community maintains links with other communities.

The Marwari favour modern medicine and also family planning. They are strongly in favour of savings. They have access to all civic amenities.

M.A. Kalam
Zubeeda Banu

MAVILAN

The Mavilan are mainly agricultural labourers. The name Mavilan is believed to be of Tulu origin and is derived from *mavilani*, meaning a 'medicinal herb' (Thurston, 1909; Luiz, 1962). They are also engaged in extracting indigenous medicines from local herbs. The Mavilan are also referred to as Meenavar, the literal meaning of which is 'fishermen'. However, the name has no uniform application to the entire community and people do not accept it as their synonym. They do not have any title. Their total population was 1341 in the Census of 1931. They were enumerated as 64 in the Census of 1981. Constitutionally, they belong to the Scheduled Caste category. They are mainly distributed in Tiruchchirappalli, Salem and South Arcot Districts, both in the plains and coastal regions. The Mavilan speak Tamil and use its script.

Luiz (1962) describes the Mavilan as sturdy, with prominent eyebrows, curly hair, slightly inverted lips and light to very dark brown complexion.

The Mavilan are nonvegetarian, who do not eat beef. They eat game and some eat pork. Their staple food is rice and *cholam*, supplemented by a variety of pulses, vegetables, roots, tubers and fruit. Their cooking medium is groundnut oil. They consume milk and milk products. Men smoke *beedis* and cigarettes and drink arrack occasionally. They also use snuff. Women chew betel and tobacco.

The Mavilan social divisions are exogamous clans and lineages. They have forgotten the names of their clans, but remember the clan deities. Veeramalayandiswamy, Ponnarsankaraswamy, Periakkalswamy, Sellandiamman, Periyaswamy, Pattavan and Nellammal are some of their clan deities. Lineage is reckoned through clan deities. The function of the clans and lineages is to regulate marriage alliances and indicate descent. They consider themselves superior to the Pallan and the Parayan but concede superior rank to such communities as the Brahman, the Reddiar, the Muthuraja and the Vellalar in the social hierarchy.

The Mavilan follow endogamy at the community level. They

prefer and practise consanguineous marriages restricted to cross-cousins and maternal uncle-niece. The age at marriage ranges from 18 to 21 years. Marriage by negotiation is usual. Monogamy is the norm, but polygyny is also permitted. The symbols of marriage are the *thali* and toe-rings. *Parisapanam* (bride-price) is paid. Dowry is paid in kind among rich families. The rule of residence is patrilocal after marriage. Divorce is permitted with social approval in case of adultery. No compensation is given to either party. Either party can divorce. Children are the responsibility of either parent as decided by the caste panchayat. A divorcee can remarry. Both widow and widower remarriages are permitted. Sororate is also permitted.

Both nuclear and extended families exist among the Mavilan. The father is the head of the family. Inheritance of property is by the males. There is no avoidance relationship among them, at present. A joking relationship exists among brothers-in-law, and with grandparents and grandchildren. The eldest son succeeds as the head of the family after the death of his father.

Mavilan women have a secondary social status. They have no right over ancestral property. They earn and contribute to the family income by working as agricultural labourers. They sell fruit and fish. They control family expenditure. They participate in social and religious functions along with their men.

During the seventh or ninth month of a Mavilan woman's first pregnancy, her parents observe the *valaikappu* ritual. She is then taken to her natal home for delivery. They observe birth pollution for 7 or 11 days and perform *punyadanam* (ceremonial purification) on the last day. The naming ceremony takes place on the same day. The tonsuring and ear-boring ceremonies are done when the child is five. When a girl attains puberty, she is secluded for 15 days. On the 15th day, she is given a ceremonial bath (*manjal neerattu vizha*). On that day, she receives her first sari from her maternal uncle. A feast is given to the invitees on the occasion.

The Mavilan conduct *nichayathartham* (betrothal) at the bride's residence, during which the marital alliance is confirmed formally by the two parties exchanging betel and arecanuts. The marriage takes place at the bridegroom's resi-

dence and is completed within a day. While tying the *thali*, the bridegroom makes first knot and his sister ties the other two. The couple are then blessed by the elders. The consummation ceremony is at the bridegroom's residence.

The Mavilan either bury or cremate their dead. They carry the body on a *padai* (bier) to the burial or cremation ground. The eldest son performs the last rites for the mother and the youngest for the father. Death pollution lasts for 16 days. On the second day, the chief mourner, along with close relatives, goes to the burial or cremation ground and conducts *paloothuvizha* (pouring of milk). In case of cremation, they collect bones and ashes and dispose of them in water. The *karumathi* takes place on the 16th day. The chief mourner is tonsured. He is also given new clothes by close relatives. The priest performs *punyadanam* (ceremonial purification) to mark the end of pollution. Some people conduct annual death rites known as *thivasam*.

Agricultural labour is the major economic activity of the Mavilan. Land is their natural resource, but very few of them own land. They cultivate paddy, *cholam*, *ragi* and cotton. People who live on the banks of the river Kaveri do fishing also. They also sell fruits and hunt rabbits for their own use. They deal in cash. A few of them are employed in government and private service.

There is a traditional caste council and elders of the Mavilan community are its members. It settles disputes. It sanctions divorce in case of adultery. For elopment, it imposes a cash fine and gets the couple married. In case of theft, a cash fine is imposed. Young Mavilan have started a caste association (Mavilan Manram) to work for the welfare of the community. The Mavilan form a part of the Meenavar cooperative societies in some places, through which they get loans from the government to develop their fishing activities.

The Mavilan are Hindus. They have several clan deities. Some of them are Ponnarsankaraswamy, Periakkalswamy, Veeramalayandiswamy, Sellandiamman, Periyaswamy, Pattavan and Nellamal. The clan deities are worshipped as family deities. They conduct *panaga pujai* for the clan deities once in three months. On that day, they prepare a mixture of jaggery, cardamom, lime juice and water and fill six pots with it. They

place the six pots before the deity and perform puja. After completing the puja, all of them drink the liquid. Mariamman and Bidariamman are their village deities. Once a year they conduct the village deity's festival. It lasts for five days and a goat or a cock is sacrificed to the deity. They also celebrate other Hindu festivals, such as Pongal, Deepavali and Karthigai Deepam.

The Mavilan recite folk-songs and folk-tales during temple festivals. They use a percussion instrument known as *udukkai*. *Kolattam* and *kummi* are their traditional dances.

The Mavilan do not accept water and cooked food from communities such as the Pallan and the Parayan. They accept cooked and uncooked food and water from all other communities. They share wells with other communities. They share cremation grounds, but use a separate place in them. They participate in the festivals of other communities. They receive the services of the barber and washerman. They maintain patron-client, landlord-tenant and cultivator-labour relationships. There are Mavilan traders who market fruit and fish. Some of them work in the defence services, others are village administrative officers. Political leadership has emerged at the village panchayat level.

The Mavilan favour formal education. But there are many dropouts from studies due to poverty. They use both modern and traditional medicare. They favour family planning. They have access to civic amenities.

D. XAVIOUR

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MODAVANDI

The Modavandi are caretakers of the lame children of the Kongu Vellalar and, as the name itself implies, were once alm collectors (*modam* = lame, *andi* = alm collector). They are a subgroup of the Kongu Vellalar. A humane contribution of the Kongu Vellalar to society is the establishment of a unique system to sustain handicapped children. The *Modavandi Pattayam* of 1744 A.D. offers the following details. The Rayar was a political representative of the Vijayanagara king. One of his officers, Tuluva Nayak, camped near the banks of the Bhavani, when the Kaveri was in spate. They found a box afloat on the water. The box was picked up and, inside, they found a lame child. Tuluva Nayak was entrusted with the responsibility of bringing up the child. Later, the Rayar summoned the Kongu Vellalar and ordered them to leave their lame children to the Tuluva Nayak. A choultry was constructed in the village of Dhantikai (near Sathyamangalam in the present Periyar District. They also endowed the following seven villages with eight thousand gold coins to take care of the inmates: Umpalatham, Kottur, Sempatholu, Dhantikai, Punnaimedu, Sathyamangalam, Solanur. The *Pattayam* further indicates that the lame children and the female children of the Vettuva, a nomadic tribe, were deserted along the way and allowed to die, as the Vettuva needed only healthy sons to take care of their herds. Likewise, the Kongu Vellalar also practised infanticide of lame babies. This was brought to an end by the formation of the Modavandi as the caretakers of the lame children of the Kongu Vellalar.

Another version of the story of their origin is that the Chola King Kandarathithan gave his daughter in marriage to a Chera prince. He also gave 48,000 agricultural families (Vellala *kudigal*) as dowry and they were settled in the Kongu country. The Tuluva Vellalar among them were named Modavandi, were given certain rights and entrusted with the responsibility of taking care of the lame children of the Kongu Vellalar. If the Kongu Vellalar did not hand over a lame child to the Modavandi the latter had the right to kidnap the child. While handing over the child, it was customary to also give a bullock cart if it was a lame child and a stick if it was a blind child. The

Tuluva Nayak descendants, having formed a close association with the Kongu Vellalar, are called Tuluva Vellalar. The practice of adopting lame children was in operation till the latter half of this century. The Modavandi called themselves Modavandi Kounders. Modavandi families are found concentrated in an area called Langarkana in Coimbatore. *Langarkana* itself means Modavandi in Hindi or Urdu. The Modavandi are now distributed in Coimbatore and Periyar Districts. They do not live in groups as they did in the past. However, a number of families are found in a group in Langarkana, but they dislike identifying themselves as Modavandi, instead, they prefer to identify with the Kongu Vellalar. They speak Tamil and use the same script. Some elderly members recall that they had once spoken Tulu.

The Modavandi are nonvegetarian, but do not eat beef or pork. Their traditional staple food is *ragi*, *kambu* and *colam*. But nowadays rice seems to have become their staple food. They drink coffee and tea. Alcoholic drinks are taken occasionally. The elderly chew tobacco. Men smoke cigarettes and *beedis*.

Vertically extended families are prevalent among the Modavandi, but nuclear families are on the rise. Inheritance is through male primogeniture. Succession is by the eldest son. Women are mostly involved in household work. They are consulted in making major family decisions.

The Modavandi community is divided into four *kulams* (subgroups): Maniar Kulam, Muthai Kulam, Venduvar Kulam and Poothar Kulam. They marry within the same subgroup and, thus, subgroup endogamy is practised. Cross-cousin marriages are common. Marriages are arranged by negotiation. The marriage expenses are borne by the bride's family. Four sovereigns of gold is said to be the standard dowry. The marriage is preceded by *siru seer pariyam*, the betrothal, held on the day before the marriage, although negotiations may have been concluded earlier. The bridegroom brings a sari and some jewellery for the bride, together with betel, arecanuts and fruits. On the day of the marriage, a specific ritual such as *uruma kattum seer* is conducted. The uncle of the bridegroom gives a turban to the bridegroom, which he wears till the end of the wedding. This is followed by the *nattukal seer*. A stone

is planted at the crossroads and adorned with thread sanctified with turmeric. The bride and the bridegroom worship this icon. The ritual is meant to ward off the evil eye from the bridegroom is called *kuppari kottuthal*, and from the bride is called *maman pennuthal*. *Kanniadhanam* is practised. The symbol of marriage is the *thali*. The bridegroom ties the *thali* around the neck of the bride in a ritual called *thiruputtuthal*. Mud is collected from a temple or an anthill and a mound is formed with it in a corner of the marriage dais. A sugarcane, *peykarumbu*, is planted in it to bring prosperity to the couple. Before a marriage, their family goddess, Kanniatha, is worshipped in a ritual called *vilakku mavu eduthal*. The *pattakarar*, or *seerkarar*, also plays a major role in Modavandi marriages. The Kongu Vellalar do not entertain marital relationships with the Modavandi, as they consider them inferior. However, this is not accepted by the Modavandi, who claim equal status.

Childbirth among the Modavandi is followed by a purification ceremony on the 16th day. This is performed by a priest from the same group. *Valaikappu* (wearing of bangles) is observed in the seventh month or ninth month of a woman's first pregnancy. Puberty rites for girls are not observed. However, pollution is observed for 16 days in the house.

News of a death in a Modavandi family is carried to the relatives and friends by the cobbler (*madari*). The dead are usually buried, unless the person has died of some infection; in such a case, he or she is cremated. A ceremony is performed on the seventh or ninth day to end pollution (*karumathi*). The ashes and bones are disposed of in water.

The traditional occupation of the Modavandi was to seek alms from the Kongu Vellalar. They used to wear green turbans when they went around a Vellalar village to collect alms. They took the lame children in their custody with them when they went to the villages. They accepted goats, cows, grain and even cash as alms. Alm collecting is now totally extinct and they are not happy with recollecting their traditional occupation which used to be their only means of livelihood. Now they are found in business, agriculture and government jobs.

The Modavandi no longer have a traditional panchayat. A caste association was formed, but it has been dissolved as it

revealed their identity as Modavandi. They now take their disputes to court.

The Modavandi are Hindus. Their caste deity is said to be Kanniatha, whose temple is in Kaspapettai, a village in Modavandi Sathyamangalam, 14 km from Erode. They also worship Lord Muruga of Palani.

The Modavandi are well aware of the advantages of formal education. Children are sent to school. Some of them study in professional courses. Though they have knowledge of indigenous medicines, they mostly opt for modern medicare. They favour family planning. They have access to all civic amenities.

B. SELVARAJ

MOUNDADAN CHETTY

The Moundadan Chetty are also known as the Moundan Chetty. The community uses Chetty as a title. It is said that their community name was coined by the British. Since they lived in the hills, they were known as Malai (mountain) Chetty. Hence, the British called them Mountain Chettys. The term 'mountain' in time became corrupted to Moundan and, later, Moundadan. The community does not have subgroups. Some of them say that they migrated from Kannada Rajya (Karnataka), specifically the Mysore area. Some of them say that they are an aboriginal group from the Nilgiris. They live only in the Nilgiris District. Their concentration is more in Gudalur taluk, particularly in the villages of Cherumulli, Padandorai, Putturvagal, Mudumalai, Sri Madurai, Gudalur, Pandalur and Nelliyalam. They inhabit the densely forested hilly terrain and valleys of the Nilgiris. They speak a Kannada dialect amongst themselves. They speak both Malayalam and Tamil with others and use the Tamil or Malayalam script. In the past, the community had some identification marks. The men sported turban and earrings and wore a *kudumi* (hair tuft). Women wore earrings, nosestuds and nose-rings, bracelets and anklets and clothes similar to those of the Kurumba tribe of the Nilgiris. However, they no longer dress like this.

The Moundadan Chetty are nonvegetarian, who eat game, but not beef. They consume all varieties of pulses, vegetables, roots and tubers. Their staple food is rice, *ragi* and *samai*. They prefer coconut oil for cooking. Most of the men are occasional drinkers. They generally drink *kallu* (toddy) or *sarayam* (arrack). Elderly women also consume alcoholic drinks during rituals and festivals. They consume tea, coffee and milk products. Most of the men smoke *beedis* and cigarettes. Both men and women chew tobacco and betel and use snuff.

The Moundadan Chetty community is divided into 25 *kula* or *tharavad* (clan or lineage or surname). Of these, the Cherumilli Chetty, Kelavatta Kounder, Keel Chetty, Puttu Chetty and Koti Chetty are considered to be the superior *kulas*. The *kulas* mainly regulate marriage alliances and indicate descent.

Men generally prefix the *kula* names to their personal names and suffix the community title. The Moundadan Chetty have equal status with the Badaga, Wynadan Chetty and Ezhuthachan.

Both nuclear and joint families are found among the Moundadan Chetty. They do not observe any kind of avoidance relationship. They have joking relationships between sisters-in-law and brothers-in-law. Succession is by the eldest son. Nowadays, a few families give small shares in the property to daughters.

The Moundadan Chetty follow community level endogamy and *kula* level exogamy. They practise both types of cross-cousin (father's sister's daughter and mother's brother's daughter) consanguineous marriages. Junior sororate and senior levirate are allowed. The age at marriage for girls is between 18 to 22 years, while for boys it is between 20 and 27. Marriages are arranged through negotiation. Both sororal and non-sororal polygyny is allowed. The marital norm is monogamy. Their marriage symbols are *kumkum* (vermilion) and the *thali*. Traditionally, the Moundadan Chetty do not pay dowry or bride-price. Divorce is permitted, with social approval. Only the husband can initiate divorce. Children are the responsibility of the parent chosen by their panchayat. Remarriage is allowed for widows, widowers and divorcees. Most divorces are now sought in courts of law.

Traditionally, women have no right to parental property in the Moundadan Chetty community. Women participate in all kinds of agricultural operations, animal husbandry, poultry rearing and other economic activities. Women have a significant role in their social functions and religious activities. Most women work as agricultural or plantation labourers. A few of them work in private and government organisations.

The Moundadan Chetty observe a pre-delivery ritual called *koddai* during the eighth month of a woman's pregnancy. It is celebrated at her in-laws' house. Her parents and other relatives come to her house and offer ghee-rice and curd-rice to the pregnant woman. She is then taken to her natal home for the delivery. A Paniya midwife is paid in both cash and kind for her services. They don't have any pre-delivery restrictions, but they strictly observe post-natal pollu-

tion for seven or nine days. Till the end of pollution, the mother and the child are kept in seclusion. On the seventh or ninth day after delivery, a ceremonial bath is given to the mother and the child. After that, the mother is allowed into the kitchen and other rooms of the house. On this day they sprinkle the *nambalineeru* (sacred water brought from the Nambalineeru Kottai temple) on the mother, child and house. *Punyavachanam* includes five purificatory objects, such as *gomutra* (cow's urine), *halu* (milk), *dharbha* (sacred grass), *mavini yele* (mango leaves) and *almara* (banian). They conduct *punyavachanam* to end any kind of pollution. The child is named when it is six months old, after an astrologer is consulted.

The child is tonsured at a temple when it is three. On the same day, they pierce the earlobes of girl children.

When a girl attains menarche, the Moundadan Chetty observe puberty rites. The girl's maternal uncle is the first to be informed that she has become a *pushpavathy*. He arranges a small temporary hut to be built outside the house and she is secluded in it for seven days. On the seventh day, she is given a ceremonial bath to end pollution. After the ceremonial bath, she goes to the banks of a river or a brook, and performs puja there. *Nambalineeru* (sacred water) is sprinkled on the roof of the house. After conducting *punyavachanam,* the girl is allowed to enter the house. On the same evening, a small function is conducted (*nemarasaddi*). A feast is given to relatives. On the same day, the maternal uncle may ask for the girl's hand for his son.

In the past, the Moundadan Chetty conducted marriage rituals over five days. The rituals on the five days were *neerattu* (ceremonial bath), *alangaram* (adornment), offering of sweets to the bridal couple, worshipping their *kula* deities and other deities, *bharat kattu* (giving paddy to the Paniyan), offering of sweets, gold ring and chain to the bride and the concluding *kanyadhanam* (*dharavarpu kudupu*). The wedding feast is given by the bridegroom's parents. After the marriage, the couple visit their clan deity's temple or regional deity's temple. They conduct the *shanthi muhurtham* (consummation ceremony) on the third day after marriage, or on the same day.

The Moundadan Chetty cremate or bury their dead. Only very old people are cremated, all others are buried. They have separate cremation grounds. A Paniyan carries the news of the death to the relatives. The Parayan or the Kurumba play mournful music in the funeral procession. They dispose of the corpse within a day after the death. A final ceremonial bath is given the body before it is placed on the bier. After the funeral, all relatives bathe before returning home. The Moundadan Chetty observe death pollution for 16 days. On the ninth day, they observe *karumathi*. They conduct *punyavachanam* on the 16th day, as a mark of death pollution. If more than one person dies on the same day within the *kulam*, they arrange a common *karumathi* for all the deceased. They observe ancestral worship once a year.

The Moundadan Chetty are mainly a landowning community. A few of them are tenant cultivators, while others are landless. The economic activities of the community are hunting and gathering, terrace cultivation, settled cultivation and animal husbandry. A few of them work in private and government organisations. Some of them are un-skilled labourers in the tea and coffee estates of the local area. A few of them have now taken up carpentry. Some landowners maintain tea and coffee plantations. They also grow vegetables and paddy, pepper and ginger. Some have started petty trade and business in local areas. They market their coffee and tea to government societies. At times they sell their produce to middlemen.

The Moundadan Chetty have a traditional *jati panchyat*. Each *kulam* of the community has a traditional leader called *tharavattu karnavar* (*jati* head). There are 25 *tharavattu karnavar* in the entire community, but they are always from the five superior *kulams* of the community. The *nattu karmikar* are the elders of the respective *kulams*. The succession of the *nattu karmikar* is similar to that of the *tharavattu karnavar*. Age is an important factor in becoming a head in the community. The *tharavattu karnavar* are the elders who regulate the marriage ceremonies in the community. They take the lead in negotiating marriage alliances. They settle disputes related to property, divorce or any kind of disagreements in the community. They also arrange divorce and widow remarriages in the community. Their

kula panchayat imposes cash fines, social boycott and excommunication on offenders. The money collected is deposited in the temple *hundis*. In case disputes are not settled by the *tharavattu karnavar*, the case is referred to the *nattu karmikar panchayat*. The decision of this body is final. At present, their main duty is confined to the administration of their respective temples and working for the welfare of the community.

Most Moundadan Chetty are Saivites. Each *kula* of the community has an associated goddess (either Mariamma or Bhagavathi) or god (either Ariyavilliyan or Paradevata). They have few regional deities, *viz.* Bommadevar at Mudumalai, Mangudi Amma at Gudalur, Vettakasai Sivan at Nambalkoti, Vishnu at Sri Madurai, Vettaikara Sivan at Kalingara and Varadam Paradeva at Chuclikandu. Each *kula* of the community conducts a fair for their clan deity every December. They celebrate major festivals such as Onam, Vishu and Sivaratri. The community have an oral tradition. Their folk-songs are sung at marriages and temple fairs.

The Moundadan Chetty receive the agricultural services of the Paniyan, Kurumba and Naicker. The Paniyan and Kurumba play music during the death rituals of the Moundadan Chetty. The Kurumba or the Paniyan women are their midwives. The Paniyan erect the Moundadan Chetty marriage *pandal*, and carry the news of death. Particularly during the Moundadan Chetty marriage ritual, the Paniyan get much paddy and clothes from their patrons. They share water resources with other communities. They have a separate cremation ground. Patron-client and cultivator-labour relationships exist between the Moundadan Chetty and the Paniyan, Kurumba and Naicker.

The Moundadan Chetty favour formal education for their children. The children study upto the secondary school level. Very few go on to college. Boys drop out from studies due to poverty. They favour both indigenous and modern medicare. They favour family planning. They have access to all civic amenities. Some of their hamlets have yet to get electricity and are to be connected by good roads.

V.S. Deep Kumar

MUDUVAN

The Muduvan are a hill tribe of Tamil Nadu. They live in the Cardamom Hills in Madurai District and the Anamalai Hills in Coimbatore District. They are also known as Muduvar and Mudugar. Accroding to the 1981 Census there were 696 persons as Muduvan and 310 persons as Muthuvan in Tamil Nadu. The Muduvar are called *takappan makkal*, 'Sons of the father', by the plainsfolk.

Ethnologists and anthropologists agree that the ancestral home of the Muduvar was in the Pandya Kingdom, not far from Madurai. Ethnographic and historical accounts exist regarding their origin and migration (Sakthivel, 1978). During a war in the Pandya Kingdom, their ancestors fled to the hills carrying their children on their backs (*muduvu*). Hence they are known as Muduvar. According to another account, when they left Madurai they carried on their backs the image of Goddess Meenakshi and brought it to Neriyamangalam. The Muduvar rank high in point of precedency among the hill tribes. That is why they are called 'old people' (*mudu* = 'old').

A Muduvar hamlet is called a *kudi*. A *kudi* is uniethnic in nature. The Muduvar are in the habit of shifting their settlement once every two or three years and so they do not construct permanent houses. Older Muduvar males are easily identified by their peculiar turban. The turban-wearing habit is slowly disappearing among the young. Adult males shave their heads, leaving a tuft of hair in the front. The Muduvar speak Tamil, but some are conversant with Malayalam as well.

Their staple foodgrain are rice, millets and *ragi*. They are nonvegetarian, but do not eat beef. They have a special liking for fish. Groundnut oil is their cooking medium. They drink tea and coffee without adding milk. They consume homemade alcoholic beverages and are habituated to chewing betel leaves with arecanuts. They smoke *beedis* and cigarettes.

The Muduvar are organised into six exogamous clans and these clans are further divided into 48 lineages. A clan is called a *kuttam* and a lineage a *vamsam*. The Melakuttam clan is considered superior to the others and the *muppan*, the leader of the Muduvar settlement, is always chosen from this clan.

Muduvar women take care of their households and children, collect firewood and fetch water. Both husband and wife have equal responsibility in bringing up the children. Women are allowed to sing and dance in ceremonies, but not to talk to outsiders without prior permission of the chief of the settlement. Muduvar women are permitted to visit the temple only on Pongal day.

The Muduvar are an endogamous group. The exogamous clans govern their matrimonial alliances. Marriage by service, elopement, capture and arrangement are the usual forms. Marriage to a sister's daughter or the daughter of a maternal uncle or paternal aunt is preferred. Age at marriage varies from 18-20 years for girls and 20-25 for boys. Monogamy is the norm, though polygyny is permitted on grounds of barrenness and ill-health. A bamboo comb inserted in the hair on the head of the woman serves as the marriage symbol.

Nuclear families are predominant among the Muduvar. The Muduvar follow patrilocal residence. Interpersonal relations are cordial among the household members. All male children have equal right to their ancestral property. Muduvar parents usually give household articles and one-fourth of their cattle to their daughter. The eldest son succeeds as the head of the family. Muduvar widows and widowers live alone and are not allowed to live with their relatives.

When a Muduvar woman delivers a child, she is confined to a lonely hut. Pollution is observed for nine days and is terminated with a ceremonial bath given to the mother and child on the last day, after which they are accepted back into the house. The child is named on the same day and community feast is arranged on the occasion. Generally, the names of ancestors or gods and goddess are given to the children. Tonsorial rites are performed only for boys, when they are six years old. The head is shaved, leaving a tuft of hair in front.

The Muduvar girls on attaining menarche are secluded in a hut called *tennavidu* or *mollukavidu*. Pollution is observed for five days and is terminated with a ceremonial bath. As the girl enters her home, her friends greet her by sprinkling water on her. Then after being blessed by her parents, she goes to her maternal uncle's home where he gifts her a new sari and serves

a feast to all the Muduvar of the settlement. The pubertal ceremony is known as *telacatanku*. After the feast, older girls take her to the girl's dormitory, *kumarimatam*, where they sing and dance.

Most Muduvar marriages are conducted with the consent of the parents. If both parents agree to the proposed marriage, the bridegroom's party goes to the bride's home without prior information one or two weeks after such accord. As soon as they reach the bride's settlement, the information of their coming is conveyed to the parents of the bride. The bride and her parents then hide in the forest and the bridegroom and his party start searching for them. Usually the bridegroom finds the bride in the forest within two or three days. The bride's friends arrange food during the search period. The bridegroom's party, while searching for bride, carry with them a new sari, a comb, a bangle and a necklace. When the bridegroom finds the bride, he immediately drapes the sari over her, puts the comb in her hair and slips on the bangles and necklace. The very physical contact between the bridegroom and the bride amounts to marriage. Generally, both bride and bridegroom stay in the forest till the next morning. The bridegroom's party sings marriage songs while searching for the bride and when they find her, the bride's party reciprocates the singing.

The Muduvar bury their dead far from their settlements. Bamboo and dry grass are used to make the bier. A thatched structure is erected over the burial place as they believe in life after death. A heavy stone is placed over the grave to serve as an identification mark. If a person dies on a Saturday, the body is buried together with a live chicken, the significance of which is, however, not known. They observe pollution for seven days and it is terminated by performing *karumathi* on the last day. The pujari, the priest of the Muduvar, officiates at the ceremony. A nonvegetarian feast is served the relatives on the occasion by the eldest son. On this day, the male Muduvar do not wear their turbans as a mark of respect to the person who died.

The Muduvar are either agriculturists or agricultural labourers. None of them own land. They farm in the govern-

ment reserve forest land, using primitive cultivation methods. Collection of minor forest produce and rearing cattle and poultry also generate income. Muduvar women make baskets, mats, grain containers, winnowing pans and window screens for their domestic use, seldom attempting to sell them.

The head of the Muduvar tribal panchayat is called the *muppan* or *maniyakkaran* or *kanikkaran* and he controls the group with the help of a council of elders. Every Muduvar settlement has a tribal panchayat which meets to decide on cases of adultery, rape, divorce and theft. The tribal panchayat also takes decisions on vital matters regarding agriculture, festivals, shifting of the settlements and violation of rules in a settlement. The council imposes fines on the wrongdoers. The Muduvar headman acts as priest, judge and folk-doctor. He knows all the medicinal herbs, folk medicine, and cures for various diseases. The headmanship is hereditary. If a *muppan* has no son, then his eldest son-in-law succeeds him. The chief leader, or head of the entire community in Tamil Nadu and Kerala, is called *melvaken*.

Grown-up unmarried Muduvar boys and girls sleep in separate dormitories specially constructed on either side of the Muduvar settlement. The Muduvar boys' dormitory is called *jantari matam* and the girls' *kumari matam*. The girls' dormitory is looked after by a woman. The Muduvar's bachelor leader is called *elantary thalaivar*. He is the second most powerful person in the Muduvar tribal community and receives due respect from all during their social and religious activities. He and his team of youths help the needy Muduvar, and in turn, they get five measures of paddy and a chicken. The Muduvar consider bachelors as the main work force of their tribal community. The post of *elantary thalaivar* is not hereditary.

The Muduvar are Hindus, who also worship the sun, river and forest, apart from Lord Muruga, Ramar, Meenakshi and Bhadrakali. Muduvar rituals are controlled by the *muppan* and the *pujari*. The Muduvar pujari performs religious rites. The Muduvar have family as well as clan deities. They celebrate *Thai Pongal* (the harvest festival in the month of January), *Chittirai Pongal* (April), Deepavali and Onam. The Muduvar have faith in black magic, witchcraft and sorcery.

The Muduvar are experts in making household articles with bamboo. They have folk-songs and folk-tales. Muduvar women and men sing songs on ceremonial occasions like marriage.

The Muduvar believe they are superior to the other tribal groups in the Cardamom and Anamalai Hills. They neither allow other tribal groups to enter their homes nor dine with them. The contact with neighbouring Tamils and Malayali is bringing change among the Muduvar in their economic social and religious lives and in their political awareness.

The Government has issued them ration cards and they now utilise the Public Distribution System. The Agricultural Department of the Tamil Nadu Government has distributed implements and seeds to some Muduvar settlements. The Midday Meals Programme is being availed of by them.

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MUKKUVAN

The Mukkuvan are distributed mainly in the coastal areas of Tirunelveli and Kanniyakumari Districts. Most of them are Roman Catholics and they still retain the Portuguese names with which their forefathers were christened, after conversion to Christianity.

According to Thurston (1909), "In the Census Report of 1871, the Paravans are summed up as being a fishing caste on the Madura and Tinnevely coast who were found by the Portuguese on their arrival in India to be groaning under the Mohammadan yoke and were assisted by the Portuguese on condition of their becoming Christians." According to the Madras Census Report of 1901, "there are in reality three castes which answer to the name Paravan and speak Tamil, Malayalam and Canarese respectively. Probably all three are descended from the Tamil Paravans or Parathavans. The Tamil Paravans are fishermen on the sea coast. Their headquarters is in Tuticorin and their headman is called Talavan" (quoted in Thurston, 1909).

The mother tongue of the Mukkuvan is Tamil. They use the Tamil script. They are also conversant with Malayalam.

Being a fishing community, a major part of the diet of the Mukkuvan consists of fish. Rice is their staple foodgrain. Their vegetable and fruit consumption is moderate. They use coconut oil for cooking. While the men consume liquor almost regularly, some women take during feasts and festivals. The men smoke *beedis* and cigarettes. Both men and women chew betel leaves. They drink tea and coffee. Milk products are consumed occasionally.

The Mukkuvan are an endogamous group. Monogamy is the rule. Though some cases of cross-cousin marriages occur, the practice is not common. Parallel cousin and uncle-niece marriages are forbidden. Marriages are usually arranged by families through negotiation. Marriage by the exchange of sisters is also practised. The age at marriage varies from 16 to 20 years for girls and 20-26 for boys. Though the practice of dowry is not the norm, some affluent families give dowry

to their daughters. Dowry, in kind, may include a mechanised boat, a fishing net, a cycle or even a newly-built hut. A ring (worn on the left hand) and a *thali* chain are the symbols of marriage.

If any dispute arises between the husband and the wife, the wife is usually sent back to her father's house. Disputes are common and the separation is usually temporary. The *thalaivan* (headman) arbitrates and reunites the couple. Sometimes, the priest from the church settles the issue. Widow and widower remarriages are permitted.

A Mukkuvan couple usually move out of their respective parental homes after marriage and set up a separate home. Occasionally, the couple stay with either the husband's parents or the wife's parents in case they are very old and need help. Major decisions are taken by the eldest male member of the family. A boy of ten or twelve is very often seen accompanying his father or grandfather to sea. The daughters of the family help their mothers in household chores and in looking after younger siblings. Traditionally, only one-eighth of the family property was given to the daughters, the rest of it went to the sons. But nowadays, the property is divided equally among the sons and daughters.

Though Mukkuvan women help their men in the economic sphere and participate in all the rituals of the community, their status may be said to be low compared to that of the men of the community. Important decisions are usually taken only by the men. Very few girls go to school.

Usually on the 14th day after the birth of a Mukkuvan child or between the 14th and the 30th day, the child is taken to the church by the parents and baptised by the priest. Close relatives are invited for the ceremony. After the ceremony, if the parents can afford it, a feast is arranged for the guests.

A Mukkuvan girl, upon her first menstruation, is confined to a room for seven days. On the seventh day, she is bathed by her female relatives. Then she is dressed in new clothes, usually brought by her mother's brother. A feast is given to the relatives and friends.

After the Mukkuvan fix a marriage alliance, the fathers of the bride and bridegroom approach the priest and fix a day

for the marriage. On the marriage day, the bridegroom and bride exchange marriage vows in church, then they taste bread and wine. After the priest reads the prayer from the Holy Bible, the bridegroom ties the *thali* around the bride's neck. The couple then exchange rings. When the couple leave the church, they proceed to the bride's house where a feast is held.

When a Mukkuvan person dies, the body is buried on the same day. There are elaborate rites connected with death. The body is bathed by the relatives, covered with a shroud and placed in a coffin. The body is garlanded and wreaths are kept on it by friends and relatives. After the priest says the prayers, the lid of the coffin is closed and is carried from the home in a procession to the cemetry by the relatives. Prayers are said again as the coffin is lowered into the grave. All those present put a handful of soil on the coffin and then the grave is covered. Special prayers are then said in the church for the deceased. Celebrations are shunned for about a year by the family in which the death occurred.

Fishing is the hereditary occupation of the Mukkuvan. Most of their catch is sold immediately. The unsold fish is taken by their women to the market or from house to house for sale. Anything left over is salted and dried.

The Mukkuvan are divided into two classes based on their economic activity and economic status: those who go to sea, and those who do not go to sea but act as middlemen and buy the fish from those who catch it. The middlemen are economically better off. Some of them own mechanised boats and rent it to the fishermen on a weekly or monthly basis. Though a majority of them still pursue their traditional occupation, some have started taking up other occupations, such as industrial labour.

The oldest male member of the Mukkuvan community is their leader. Each cluster of huts in a particular area has its own leader known as the *thalaivan*. In case of the occasional intervillage dispute, the *thalaivan* intervenes and settles matters. Other than the local leaders, the church priest is an important influence. He not only performs religious duties, but also acts as an adviser and counsellor. If the *thalaivan* fails to settle a dispute, it is taken to the priest and his decision is usually accepted.

The Mukkuvan converted to Christianity, and conform to the Roman Catholic faith. The church and the priest look after their religious activities. Most of them attend the Sunday Mass in the church.

Certain arts, such as lace-making and embroidery, are taught in the church to the girls of the community. The church sells what the girls make and gives them a share. As singing hymns is a part of their worship, they are good singers. Some instruments, such as the drum and the harmonica accompany the church music.

The Mukkuvan maintain good relations with the neighbouring communities and accept food from them. They take part in the festivals of other communities. Christmas is celebrated grandly and people from all communities are invited for a meal. They share their cemetery with other Catholics.

Being an economically backward community, the Mukkuvan prefer their children to help them in their economic pursuits rather than to go to school. Both boys and girls study upto the secondary school level, but many drop out early. They use both traditional and modern medicare. They do not prefer family planning, as the more the children in a family, the more hands for work. But, nowadays their attitude towards family planning is changing. Their huts, along the coast, are not electrified. Many of them are keen to save and buy mechanised boats. Some of them depend on moneylenders and shopkeepers for loans.

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MUTHURAJA

The Muthuraja are also referred to as Mutracha, Muttaracha, Muttirasulu, Muttarasan and Mutratchan in Andhra and Muttiriyan or Palaiyakkaran in Tamil Nadu (Thurston, 1909). The Muthuracha Mahajana Sangam of Tiruchchirappalli used the term Muthiriyar (plural of Muthiriyan) as a synonym of Muthuraja and Muthuracha, claiming kinship and descent from the Muthiriyar generals and chieftains of the Cholas. The pamphlet issued by the sangam in 1964 claimed Tiruchchirappalli, Thanjavur and Pudukottai as the homeland of the ancient Muthiriyans.

According to their oral tradition, a Chola raja built a fort called Porpanaiyan Kottai and all the Muthuraja lived in that fort. Once, when some Muthurajas came out of the fort on some work, they could not get back in. The descendants of those who came out of the fort are the present Muthurajas. What happened to the rest of the Muthuraja in the fort, or to the fort itself, is not known. It is believed that they migrated to Tamil Nadu during the rule of the Vijayanagar kings and were appointed as *kavalkarar* (watchmen) (Thurston, 1909). As they were petty chiefs, they claim Kshatriya *varna* and consider them to be the descendants of Yayathi of *Mahabharata*. According to a saying, a Muthuraja is as good as a pearl (*muthu*), but became degraded when they began to catch fish. The name Muthuraja is derived from *mudi* (old) and raja (king), *i.e.* old king of a sovereign part of Telugu country. According to a myth, they are called Muthuraja as they were born of the sweat, or *muthu* "a pearl or bead of perspiration", of Lord Siva (Thurston, 1909). Though they are considered to be immigrants from the Telugu country, their mother tongue is Tamil.

The Muthuraja are nonvegetarian, who eat pork and game but not beef. They eat more millet than rice as their staple food. They eat locally available pulses and vegetables, roots and tubers. Groundnut oil is used for cooking. Consumption of fruit, milk and milk products is occasional. They drink tea and coffee. Men take alcoholic drinks. They smoke *beedis* and

cigarettes. Both men and women chew arecanut, betel leaves and tobacco with lime.

The Muthuraja have several exogamous patrilineal clans, such as Vendan, Kulakkaran, Immannan, Malayanagkulathan, Manavalan, Kadhuvari, Thothan, Mayiladi, Chukaiyan and Sulundhaiyan. The main function of the clan is to regulate marriage.

The Muthuraja are an endogamous community. They prefer marriages between maternal uncle and niece and also between cross-cousins, *i.e.* father's sister's daughter or mother's brother's daughter. Girls are married after attaining puberty, for boys the age at marriage is above twenty. The mode of acquiring a mate is by negotiation. Usually the boy's parents initiate the proposal. Monogamy is the norm, but polygyny is permitted. The *thali* and *minji* are important marriage symbols for a woman.

Extended families are on the decline and nuclear families are on the rise among the Muthuraja. The husband or father is the head of the family. He takes decisions and controls the family expenditure. Succession is by the eldest son. Property is inherited by the sons equally. If there is no son in a family, the daughters inherit. In the past, the agnatic male kin had a right to the property of a childless family.

Muthuraja women raise poultry and cattle. They participate in social and religious functions. They contribute to the family income, either by working as agricultural labourers or by selling goods.

The pregnant Muthuraja woman goes to her natal home for the first delivery after the celebration of *valaikappu* and *seemantham* in her home during the eighth month of pregnancy. *Valaikappu* is a ceremony in which the pregnant woman wears a new sari, new glass bangles and flowers. All married women apply *kumkum* on her forehead and wave an *arati* (lighted lamp kept on a plate) in front of her. The delivery is attended on by elderly women. The Muthuraja observe birth pollution for nine days. On the 16th day, the child and the mother return to their house. The tonsuring ceremony is performed for the first child at the maternal grandparents' home when it is five or seven months old. For subsequent children, the ritual is conducted at the parents' house.

Manjal neerattu vizha (puberty rites) is observed when a Muthuraja girl attains puberty. She is first given a bath and made to sit in an enclosure within the house. After seven or nine days, during which she is served a special, enriched diet which includes *puttu* (steamed rice flour mixed with sugar or jaggery and coconut gratings), the girl is given a purificatory bath and allowed into the house. She is dressed in a new sari brought by her maternal uncle and *nalungu* is performed.

The Muthuraja pay a token *parisam* (bride-price). The criterion for selecting a girl is her capability to do hard work. Horoscopes are also matched. The *nichayathamboolam* (betrothal ceremony) is arranged in the girl's house. On the occasion, the boy's family bring a new sari, blouse, flowers, fruits, betel leaves and the *parisam*. Nowadays, the girl's parents take the initiative and look for an educated boy with a white-collar job and offer him dowry, in cash and kind, to marry their daughter. The marriage is usually celebrated in the bridegroom's house. The bride, her parents and their kin arrive in the bridegroom's village on the evening prior to the marriage. When they reach the village temple, the bridegroom's party receives them and they are led to the venue of the marriage. The most important wedding ritual is the tying of the *thali* by the bridegroom. In the past, the bridegroom's sister tied the *thali* round the bride's neck. Now the bridegroom ties the first knot, while the second and third knots are tied by his sister. A Brahman priest conducts the marriage rituals. The other rituals that follow are placing the feet on the stone, looking at the Arundhati star and sowing the sprouted *navadhaniyam* (nine varieties of grains). On the same evening, the couple go to the bride's house and the consummation ceremony takes place that night. Those who cannot afford to spend on rituals, give a token *parisam* — arecanuts, 25 betel leaves, five coconuts and about eight kilograms of rice — to the girl's parents and flowers, a sari and a blouse to the girl, tie the *thali* and take her to their home. This type of marriage is called *paakku mathara kalyanam* (marriage in which betel leaves and arecanuts are exchanged). In *kattu thali kalyanam* (remarriage of a divorce or a widow), the man merely ties the *thali* and accepts the woman as his wife.

Divorce is permitted with the formal approval of the Muthuraja community panchayat, on grounds of adultery, barrenness, maladjustment, cruelty and insanity. Compensation for the maintenance of the woman is paid by the husband. The children, if they are young, stay with their mother but if they are grown up they stay with either parent. Widows, widowers and divorcees can remarry.

As soon as a death occurs in a Muthuraja family, they break a coconut and keep it by the side of the body along with a lighted oil lamp. Then they send the news of the death to all relatives through the village Vettiyan. When the relatives arrive, they bathe the body and dress it in two pieces of cloth, one to cover the body and the other tied around the head, like a turban. The sons and kin group then carry the body to the cremation ground. While returning after the cremation, they bathe in the village tank or a stream. On the second day, the Muthuraja do a ritual called *kaadatharathu.* The sons and relatives go to the cremation ground and extinguish the fire. They make an effigy of the deceased with the ash and mud while the barber collects the bones. They pour tender coconut water and milk over the effigy. The bones are put in a new pot and kept in a corner of the cremation ground. On the 16th day, the sons dispose of the bones in a tank or stream, along with some rice and a coconut. The mourners then bathe and the close relatives give new clothes to the chief mourners. During every festival, marriage or auspicious function in the family, they offer food to their ancestors in the *naduveedu* (place of worship) of the house.

The Muthuraja are traditional agriculturists and own small landholdings. Some of them are daily wage agricultural labourers. Some share crop on land owned by others. They rear goats and cows as a secondary occupation. The educated among them are in white-collar jobs.

The Muthuraja have an *oor murai panchayat,* a caste panchayat. The office of the headman of this panchayat is hereditary. If a complaint is lodged, the panchayat meets on a Sunday morning. The complainant has to pay Rs. 27 and the accused is asked to pay half that. The caste council consists of the *thalaivar* (headman), *kanakku pillai* (cashier), *kangani* (person who serves summons on the parties for the panchayat

meetings) and 12 committee members from 12 nearby villages which obey the particular panchayat. Except for the *thalaivar*, the rest are elected by voice vote. A quorum of five, besides the *thalaivar, kangani* and *kanakku pillai*, is a must for a panchayat meeting. The caste panchayat meetings are not held during the rainy season and during village festival seasons. Usually disputes that arise at the time of sharing family property, quarrels, divorce and adultery are settled by the panchayat and cash fines imposed.

The Muthuraja are Hindus. They worship their family deity Muneeswarar. They also worship deities such as Kali, Pidariamman, Kamakshiamman, Karuppu, Ayyanar, Madurai Veeraswamy and Chone Karuppar. They visit the temples at Palani, Srirangam, and Narthamalai. The Muthuraja have priests from their community to conduct the worship of their deities, but life-cycle rituals are conducted by a Brahman priest. The Muthuraja celebrate the Pidariamman festival for ten days during the month of *Chitthirai* (April-May). A priest from the Pandaram community officiates at the festival.

The Muthuraja do not accept water or cooked food from the Parayan, Pallan, Ambattan, Vannan and Asari communities. They have an exclusive cremation ground. The community has a few graduates and professionals. They are now taking interest in educating their children. Many of the girls discontinue their education after attaining puberty. The Muthuraja use both indigenous and modern medicare. They benefit from all civic amenities.

RAJALAKSHMI MISRA

Muthuraja Christian

The Muthuraja Christian are mainly distributed in the Tiruchchirappalli, South Arcot, Pudukkottai, Madurai, Coimbatore, and Madras Districts. They use the surname Servai.

They are nonvegetarian, but do not eat beef. Their diet is similar to that of their Hindu counterparts.

The Muthuraja Christian are one endogamous group. They

are subgrouped on the basis of Christian denominations. But intermarriage with a Hindu is allowed, provided one of the couple becomes a convert to the other's religion. On the whole, however, they prefer marriage alliances within the Christian caste group. If the couple belong to different denominations, one of them changes to the other's denomination. Being Christians, they do not accept the *varna* classification.

Marriages are arranged by parents through negotiation. Generally Muthuraja Christian boys get married between 21 and 25 years and girls between 18 and 21. Marriages are conducted in the church in the boy's village, with its priest officiating. The *thali* is their marriage symbol. It is a pendant with the emblem of a cross and dove's wing engraved on one side and the date of the marriage on the other. They do not pay bride-price, but demand dowry at the time of marriage. The dowry used to be partly in cash and partly in kind, *i.e.* ornaments. They marry the daughter of the father's sister or mother's brother. They do not marry a sister's daughter. Divorce is not allowed, but a widow can remarry, in the church. She can marry the younger brother of her late husband. A widower can marry the younger sister of his wife. Monogamy is the norm. They are a patrileneal and patrilocal society. Parental property is inherited equally by the sons.

The Muthuraja Christian live in joint or nuclear families. Generally, after marriage, the sons live with their parents for some years, before establishing separate homes. Their family patterns and concerns are similar to those of their Hindu counterparts.

Muthuraja Christian women are respected and consulted in every family activity. The girls are now being educated and some of the women are in white-collar jobs.

Pre-delivery rituals are observed by the Muthuraja Christian just like their Hindu counterparts. Birth pollution is observed for eight days. They visit the church on the eighth day and the child is baptised. On this day, the child is named during a special prayer in the church. The tonsuring ceremony is not compulsory. If it is performed, it is in a church, the Velankanni church being preferred. They do not celebrate the ear piercing ceremony and the ears of the girls are pierced at home by the local goldsmith. At the age of 12 or 13, children attend

Bible classes for about a month to be prepared to receive *pudunanmai* (Communion). Communion is given in a special prayer conducted in church and on this day the maternal uncle gives the child new clothes. The Muthuraja Christian used to observe puberty ceremonies for girls in the past. They no longer do so.

Among the Muthuraja Christian, marriage alliances are initiated by the bridegroom's family. They consult astrologers to match the horoscopes of the boy and the girl. The betrothal ceremony is arranged in the girl's house. Their relatives assemble and discuss the dowry and the marriage date. The two families exchange plates of betel to formalise the alliance. The wedding is held in the church in the boy's village. After the betrothal ceremony, the news is informed to the church authorities and the banns are posted for three weeks. This is called *olai vasithal*. The priest conducts the marriage according to the prescribed procedures of the church. The marriage sari and the *thali* are purchased by the bridegroom's father. After the *thali*-tying ceremony, the *machinan* (brother-in-law) gives a ring to the bridegroom and the maternal uncles of the bride and the bridegroom tie the *amman pattam*, (a coin strung on a yellow thread). The couple are then taken in procession to the bridegroom's house, where the bride and the bridegroom exchange garlands. Next, the couple visit the bride's house and return to the bridegroom's house. The consummation of the marriage takes place on the same day in the bridegroom's house.

When a death occurs among the Muthuraja Christian, the body is immediately bathed and is kept in a corner of the house in a sitting posture. All the relatives are informed. The villagers are informed by the ringing of the church bell. They bring water from a nearby well and bathe the body. The body is then covered with a white cloth and garlanded. The priest conducts special prayers in the house, in the church and at the burial ground. The body is carried to the burial ground on a bier (*tumba*), which is kept in the church. The eldest son performs the *kolli* ceremony for the mother and the youngest son performs it for the father, by throwing a handful of sand three times on the body after it has been placed in the grave. The head is placed westwards. The Vettiyan digs the grave. The

son who performed the *kolli* shaves his head at the burial ground. On the same day, they fix a cross on the grave. On the second day, they offer milk to the departed soul. Other death rituals are similar to those of the Hindu Muthuraja.

The Muthuraja Christian are agriculturalists, like the Muthuraja Hindus. Those who do not have any land are agricultural labourers. The educated among them are in white-collar jobs.

The Muthuraja Christian have their own panchayat. The council members and the panchayat members are called *nattanmaikkarar*. The office of the *nattanmai* is hereditary in some places and he is elected by voice vote in other places. Different disputes are settled by the *nattanmaikkarar*. Cash fines are collected from the guilty and the decision of the village council is final. The church does not interfere in caste activities.

The Muthuraja Christian were converted to Christianity some two to three generations ago. But Hindu and Christian Muthuraja claim the same caste identity and the same social status in the local social hierarchy. The Roman Catholics and Protestants among them have separate churches and separate burial grounds. Their important festivals are Christmas, New Year's Day, Palm Sunday, Ash Wednesday and the local festivals, namely the Antoniyar festival, which falls in February, and the St. Ignatiar festival which falls in July. The Muthuraja Christian celebrate Pongal festival but call it Antoniyar Pongal festival which is celebrated on the fourth and fifth of the Tamil month, Thai.

The relations of the Muthuraja Christian with the other communities of the area are very cordial. They mix freely with their Hindu counterparts. They educate their children and many of the educated are in white-collar jobs. They enjoy the same amenities and facilities as their Hindu counterparts.

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NADAR

The Nadar are distributed mainly in the Kanniyakumari, Tirunelveli, Chidambaranar, Kamaraj, Ramanathapuram and Madurai Districts. 'Nadar' is derived from the word *nadu* = 'country' — means 'ruler of a country' or 'a person who lives in a country'. Shanar and Gramani are synonymous with Nadar. Gramani is the Sanskritised form of *sanror*, 'learned person'. But according to Thurston (1909), those who are engaged in tapping palm juice, either from the palmyra tree (*panai maram*) or the coconut tree (*thennai maram*)are called Sanar and those who are agriculturists or who are doing business are called Nadar, while the name Gramani is preferred by those members of the community living in the northern districts. Their mother tongue is Tamil. Their women used to enlarge their earlobes and wear an ear ornament called *pambadam*. But now they wear ordinary ear-studs (*kammal*).

In the inscriptions of the great Chola king, Raja Raja (984-1013 A.D.), toddy-tappers have been referred to as Iluvans and in the *Pingalandai*, the Tamil dictionary of the 10th or 11th Century, the toddy tapper caste has been referred to as Palaiyar, Tuvasar and Puduvar to which the *Chudamani Nigandu*, a Tamil dictionary belonging to the 16th Century, adds Sanudigar. Sanudigar is considered to be the Sanskrit equivalent of Iluvar and might have been introduced after the introduction of the Brahmanical traditions. Even today, in Kerala, the toddy-tappers are called Ilavar (or Iluvar) and Tiyyar.

The Nadar claim to be Kshatriyas and consider themselves to be the descendants of the Pandya kings of Madurai who ruled before the invasion of the Nayak kings. That is why the word *nadan* is interpreted as 'the ruler of a country'. But it has also been interpreted as 'a person from a *nadu*, or 'a country' as against *uran*, 'from a village'. But at the same time, "it is by no means certain that the Shanans were not at one time a warlike tribe, for we find traces of a military occupation among several toddy drawing castes of the south, such as the Billavas (bowmen), Halepaik (old foot soldiers), Kumarapaik (junior foot). Even the Kadamba kings of Mysore are said to

have been toddy drawers and the Kadamba tree appears to be one of the palms from which toddy is extracted. They were employed by former rulers as foot soldiers and bodyguards, being noted for their fidelity" (Rice, *Mysore Inscriptions,* quoted by Thurston, 1909). Further, according to another account, the Pandya kings employed seven collectors from the Nadar community in the *teri* region and according to the available records of 1639, it seems, eleven Nadar were authorised to collect taxes from the people. The oldest and highest Nadar family was that of the Adityans of Kayamoli, near Tiruchendur in the present Chidambaranar District, (Hardgrave, 1969). One of the subgroups of the Nadar community, named Nattatti, claims descent from the union of the Pandyas and the Cholas, while another subgroup of this community, Karukkupattayar or Manattan (*maha nattan,* 'person of the big country'), claims descent from the Pandyas and prefers the name Maha Nadar in place of the former name (Hardgrave, 1969).

The Nadar have their own myth for the origin of their caste. The myth goes like this. Seven celestial virgins, while bathing in a stream, caught the eyes of the God Indra. He hid their saris, which were on the bank, and when the virgins emerged from the water, he caught and consorted with each. The seven virgins each gave birth to a male child, but on returning to their celestial world, they abandoned their sons. The Goddess Bhadrakali took pity upon them and brought them up as her own sons. One day, the River Vaigai, near Madurai, breached and as the city was threatened with a flood, the Pandya king ordered all men to carry earth in baskets to rebuild the bund. The seven sons refused to obey the king. "We were meant to carry crowns upon our heads, not baskets," the young men cried. The king was furious and ordered that one of the boys be buried in sand up to his neck and that his head be trampled by an elephant. The order was carried out, but the crushed head continued to cry out, "I will not touch the basket". The furious king ordered that the second brother too be treated likewise. This time the head cried, "Shall this head prove false to the others". The king was greatly frightened by these strange happenings and freed the remaining five sons from whom the Nadar race sprang (Hardgrave, 1969). According to another

acts as the head of the family and if the children are minors the mother herself acts as the head of the family. In such a case, her brothers help her in dealing with family affairs.

Nadar women are respected and consulted in every family matter, though they have no decision-making powers. They are given education and many of the educated women are in white-collar jobs. Women do agricultural work also and they work as labourers to support their families. The wives of the palm sap tappers, carry the palmyra sap in an earthen pot and boil it to make palm-jaggery. They also sell the palmyra sap.

A Nadar woman's first childbirth is arranged in her parent's house. The woman's parents visit their daughter's house during the seventh or ninth month of pregnancy, give a feast to all relatives and take her home. The newborn is given *cenai* (palm jaggery water). Pollution is observed for 16 days and on those days the washerwoman launders the clothes of the mother (*mattu*). On the 16th day, a yellow thread is tied round the waist of the child by the grandmother. The first tonsuring ceremony is arranged either in a Murugan temple or in their family deity's temple. The child's earlobes are pierced on this day. While the child's head is being shaved or ears pierced its maternal uncle holds it in his lap. He also has to gift the ear-studs.

Puberty rites are observed when Nadar girls attain menarche. The girl is bathed either on the same day or on the third day, depending upon the arrival of her maternal uncle. He comes with a sari, banana, fruits, sugar-candy, sweets and flowers. Pollution is observed for thirty days, during which period the washerwoman washes her clothes (*mattu*). *Sadangu* (puberty ceremony) is observed on the 30th day. The maternal uncle gives the girl a sari and she gets dressed like a bride. All the elders then bless her by applying *tiruneeru* (sacred ash) on her forehead. The relatives are given a feast and they offer gifts to the girl, some give money (*moi*). In the past, they used to take the girl out in a procession, but no longer.

Among the Nadar, marriage alliances are initiated by the bridegroom's parents. If the horoscopes of the boy and girl agree, the *nichayathartham* (betrothal) is arranged in the girl's house and a feast is served. The Nadar prefer cross-cousin

marriages. In the past, they preferred to marry a girl who was a close relative, but nowadays, dowry plays an important role in the choice of the bride. The wedding takes place in the girl's house. The marriage sari and the *thali* are purchased by the bridegroom's parents. The bride and the bridegroom are asked to sit in the chairs kept in the *pandal.* The *thali* is kept on a plate and taken to all the relatives present for their blessings. It is then handed to the bridegroom by an elderly person and the groom ties the *thali* around the neck of the bride. The bride and the bridegroom exchange garlands three times. All the elders bless the couple by applying *tiruneeru* on their foreheads. Then the newly married couple are taken inside the house and given milk and banana fruit. Later, they are taken in procession in an open car. The consummation ceremony takes place at the bride's residence.

In case of death among the Nadar, the body is kept in a sitting position in a chair, facing east or north. A 25 paise coin is placed on the forehead as a *pottu* (tilak). A coconut is broken into two halves and kept by the side of the body. A lamp is lit. A small *pandal* is made in front of the house. All the relatives are informed. They bring water from a nearby well to bathe the body. The body is then covered with a new white cloth. It is garlanded, then positioned on the bier, and carried to the burial ground. The body is cremated if the deceased is a firstborn. Others are buried. The Samban helps in the cremation or burial. The eldest son performs the *kolli* (last rites) ceremony in the burial ground by breaking an earthen pot containing water. All the sons shave their heads. If the deceased does not have a male child, the eldest daughter can perform the *kolli* ceremony. But it is performed in front of the house before the bier is lifted. On the same night, they boil either greengram or Bengal gram and distribute it to the relatives after worship. On the next day, they go to the burial ground to offer milk and a mixture of nine grains to the departed soul. During all the death ceremonies, a barber blows the conch shell and helps to perform the rituals. On the third day, the sons take oilbath and the relatives give them new clothes. A feast is arranged on this day. On the 16th day, they worship the deceased with offerings of his or her favourite

food. In case of the death of husband, the widow removes her *thali* on the second day.

The Nadar are either agriculturalists or palmyra sap tappers. Many own land. Several do business. Others are in white-collar jobs. They own palmyra trees from which sap is tapped and jaggery is prepared. Toddy is also prepared out of the palmyra sap and sold in the market. The tappers get work for six months. The other half of the year, they work as daily wage labourers in the fields. In some places, where the palmyra trees are found only in places distant from their villages, they camp in the forest till the end of the season and only then return to their village. The palm jaggery is sold in the open market. They have their own cooperative societies, through which they get loans. There are engineers, doctors, administrators, teachers and scholars in the community. Payments are generally made in cash and the agricultural labourers are paid in cash or kind.

The Nadar have their own caste panchayat, which looks after the village caste temples and the schools run by them, apart from settling disputes. Fines in cash are collected by the caste panchayat from the guilty. They have their own caste association, which looks after the welfare of the community. The caste association also runs schools and colleges.

The Nadar are Hindus and Bhadrakali is considered their caste deity. They worship her on the last Tuesday of the Tamil month *Ani* (June-July) in some places or in the month *Adi* (July-Aug) in other places. In some places, Mariamman is also worshipped in the Tamil month of *Panguni* (March-April). They also worship deities such as Murugan, Ganesh, Siva and Saraswathi and village deities such as Madaswamy, Sudalaimadan, Karuppaswamy, Muniyaswamy, Isakkiyammal, Kurarnkani Amman and Muttumalaiamman.

In 1858, persons belonging to the Nadar caste revolted against the Maharaja of Travancore by flouting his order that their women should not wear upper garments. This movement was originally initiated by the Christian converts of the caste in the Travancore kingdom. In 1859, Sir Charles Trevelyan, the then Governor of Madras, interfered and granted permission to the women of the lower castes to wear a cloth over

their breasts and shoulders (Pate, 1917 and Thurston, 1909). In 1874, they attempted to enter the great Meenakshi temple in Madurai and the Kamudi temple. Many of them have adopted Christianity and the conversions go back to 1685. "... a congregation ... of Shanans appears definitely to have been formed by 1685 at Vaddakkankulam and under Father Borghese, the first resident missionary of Kamanayakkanpatti" (Pate, 1917). Father Beschi started his Madura Mission in 1742 and a beginning was amongst the Shanan of the south, the first convert being a man of Kalankudiyiruppu, near Sattankulam in the present Mudalur (first town) in 1800 (Pate, 1917). It has also been reported that during the revolt against the ban on wearing upper garments and the attempts to enter Hindu temples, several Shanans had become Muslims (Thurston, 1909). The other social revolt occured in 1902, when the Nadar decided that "their women should no longer carry headloads or wear beads or lead bracelets and should not go to market" (Pate, 1917). Later, during the period of the Self Respect Movement in Tamil Nadu, they decided, through their caste association, that they should not engage Brahmans as priests for their ritual ceremonies.

The relations of the Nadar with other castes are cordial and in the schools and colleges run by their caste association they allow students belonging to all other castes. They get services from the barber and washerman castes. The Poo Pandaram does the puja in their temples. They have their own burial ground. Politically they are active and there are ministers, MLAs and MPs from among them.

The Nadar educate their sons and daughters and give much importance to education. They make use of both modern and traditional medicines. They have accepted the modern family planning programme. They make use of all developmental programmes.

S. MANOHARAN

Nadar Christian

The Nadar who converted to Christianity are called Nadar Christians. Though they have become Christians, they maintain their ethnic indentity and observe some preconversion practices. Social oppression might have caused them to embrace Christianity. The missionaries helped them to uplift their community by providing education that led to employment opportunities. In the past, they were not allowed to wear sandals while walking on the streets where caste Hindus lived. Their women were not allowed to wear upper garments. It is narrated by the Nadar Christian in Idaiyangudi that Robert Caldwell (later to be made Bishop) first established a small mission hospital there. As he had learnt Tamil, he was able to bridge the communication gap and help them better. Later, he established a church in Idaiyangudi, the Holy Trinity Church, building it with the funds raised in England. The construction of the church was personally supervised by him. The church bells, known as 'Joy Bells', are remarkable, for music can be played on them just as on a musical instrument. He also established an educational institution. Idaiyangudi in Tirunelveli District and Sawyerpuram and Nazareth in Chidambaranar District are the main centres of the Nadar Christian. Sawyerpuram is named after Samuel Sawyer, a Christian lay missionary who gifted the village to the persecuted Christians of his days. Rev. C.F. Schwartz, Rev. Ringletaube, Rev. G.U. Pope and St. Francis Xavier are other important missionaries who worked for the conversion of the Nadar to Christianity. The Nadar Christian are identified at the regional level. They are distributed mainly in the districts of Tirunelveli, Kanniyakumari, Chidambaranar and Madurai and in Madras city.

The Nadar Christian converse in Tamil among themselves and with others. They use the Tamil script. Some Nadar in Kanniyakumari District know Malayalam also.

The Nadar Christian are nonvegetarian. Those in Kanniyakumari District eat beef and pork too. Otherwise their diet is the same as that of their Hindu counterparts.

The Nadar Christian follow endogamy at the community level. Consanguineous marriages between cross-cousins are practised with the approval of the church. In some places, maternal uncle-niece marriage is also practised. The family structure, inheritance rules, and interfamily relationships among the Nadar Christian is the same as among the Hindu families. The status of their women, too, is the same. They observe puberty rites, known as *sadangu*, for adolescent girls, similar to the rites of the Hindus, except that they are not very strict about puberty pollution or the seclusion of the girl.

Usually, Nadar Christians do not observe pre-delivery rituals for pregnant women. However, it is reported that some people belonging to rich families conduct *valaikappu* rituals for pregnant women. Children are baptised within three months after birth. Confirmation is performed during adolescence. The boy or girl is taught the Holy Scriptures and made to understand the importance and necessity of baptism for confirming his or her faith. After Confirmation, Holy Communion is given to them. The Baptism, Confirmation and Holy Communion are known as the sacraments.

Marriage alliances are fixed by the elders through negotiations. The Nadar Christian conduct the betrothal at the bride's house, with both parties exchanging betel leaves and arecanuts. After this, the banns are called in the church for three consecutive Sundays. The marriage is solemnised in the church by the priest of the church. The important rituals during the marriage ceremony are exchange of vows by the couple, the joining of right hands of the bride and bridegroom, reciting of the marriage verses by the priest, tying of the *thali* around the neck of the bride by the bridegroom and exchange of garlands by the newlyweds. The marriage is then registered. A feast is arranged for the invitees. The consummation of the marriage takes place usually on the same day.

The Nadar Christian dead are buried in the church cemetery. When a death occurs, the message is passed on to the relatives, friends and the church priest. The church bell tolls the news. The body is bathed and dressed in new clothes. It is then placed in a coffin and prayers are said. Then it is carried to the church in a procession for absolution. After

absolution, it is carried to the cemetery for burial. On the 16th day, they visit the grave and offer prayers. The 16th day function is now observed on either the third or fifth day. At a later date, some arrange a memorial service in the church. They conduct a prayer meeting annually in the house, and, sometimes, a memorial service in the church.

The economic activities of the Nadar Christian are the same as those of their Hindu counterparts. The Nadar Mahajana Sangam, a modern caste association, works for the general welfare of the Nadar community, both Hindu and Christian.

There are both Protestants and Roman Catholics among the Nadar Christian. The Protestants belong to different denominations such as the Church of South India, the London Mission Church and the Lutheran Church. The major festivals observed by the Nadar Christian are Christmas, New Year's Day, and Easter Sunday. Special prayers are held on Good Friday. They observe the Sabbath on Sunday. St. Mary's shrine in Velankanni, St. Xavier's church in Kottar and St. Georges shrine in Edathura (Kerala) are some of their sacred centres. Their sacred specialists are from the same Christian denomination but may be from any community. They are appointed by the Bishop of the Diocese concerned.

Intercommunity linkages exist in commensal norms. The Nadar Christian accept food and water from other communities. They share water sources with other communities. They share the cemetery with other Christian communities. They visit all Christian religious shrines and participate in their festivals. They maintain patron-client, landlord-tenant, and cultivator-labour relationships.

There are businessmen, scholars, teachers, white-collar jobholders, administrators, defence personnel, engineers, doctors and political leaders in the Nadar Christian community.

The Nadar Christian favour formal education. Students drop out of school mostly because of poverty. They use modern medicare and are aware of family planning. They have access to all amenities and developmental programmes.

D. XAVIOUR

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NAGARATHAR

The Nagarathar are also known as Nattukkottai Chettiar or Nattukkottai Nagarathar. The community title is Chettiar. All males of the community use Chettiar as a suffix to their names, while the community females are called Achi in the local area. The etymological origin of the word Chetty is a matter of some doubt and dispute. According to some scholars, the term 'Chetty' is traced to *Etti,* an honorific conferred on affluent and leading merchants by Tamil rulers during the Chola (846-1279 A.D.) and later Pandya times (1190-1310 A.D.). For example, we read of one Etti Sayalan, a rich merchant in the epic *Silappadikaram,* and Etti Kumaran, also a merchant of Kaveripoompattinam, in *Manimegalai.* It is believed that in earlier times, the local traders in the Tamil country were called Satta, overseas traders Nayagar and very affluent businessmen were honored with the title Etti. It is probable that the word Etti evolved as Chetti in the course of a few centuries. 'Chetty' may also be derived from the archaic Tamil word *settirai,* which is a form of customs duty or import tax and hence refer to the business and trading activities of the Chetty. Yet another view is that the term is derived from the Sanskrit word *shresti.* The root of the Sanskrit word *shresti* means 'important' or 'superior' *Shresti* also means 'leader of a merchant guild'.

The name Nattukkottai Chettiar must be of relatively recent origin, for it refers to their affluence which dates, in its external manifestation, from the last years of of the 19th century, when their financial operations overseas, particularly in Burma, proved a great success. Those Chettiar who amassed a fortune as a result of their business enterprise in Burma built huge homes, more or less mansions of indigenous style, in their ancestral villages in the Ramnathapuram District. Hence, the name Nattukkottai, which means 'country forts'. Thus the Nattukkottai Chettiar are the Chettiar who live in country forts or elegant country homes. It is interesting to note that the affluent Nagarathar, when they made their great fortunes at the turn of the century, did not give up their ancestral villages, as might have been expected, and migrate to nearby urban areas such as Madras, Madurai or Tiruchchirappalli to build their mansions,

but chose to remain in their villages. The other name, *viz* Nagarathar, can be derived in three ways: *nagaram* in ancient Tamil usage means a trading post or village. In the Chola period of South Indian history 846-1279 A.D., the term referred to a caste guild devoted to mercantile interests and, therefore, Nagarathar simply means 'those who belong to a trading community'. Secondly, the word can also be derived from the Sanskrit root *nagaraka* , or, 'city dwellers', or, metaphorically, 'one who is polished and urbane'. Yet another source of deriving the meaning of Nagarathar is found in ancient Tamil literature. Therein, *nagar* means 'palatial' or 'spacious home'. Hence, Nagarathar refers to those who build and live in large and commodious homes (Chandrasekhar, 1980).

The Nagarathar are referred to in the two earliest Tamil epics, the *Silappadikaram* and *Manimegalai* Sadavadanam Subramaniya Ayyar, (1894) traces the migration of the Chettiar from Naga Nadu to Thondaimandalam and from Thondaimandalam to Chola Nadu. The third and last migration was from Chola Nadu to Pandya Nadu (Chandrasekhar, 1980).

The Nagarathar have a legend that states they originally inhabited Naga Nadu, in Jambudvipa (India) in time immemorial. They migrated *en masse* from Naga Nadu to Kanchipuram in Thondaimandalam due to intolerable oppression by the rulers of Naga Nadu. Later, they migrated from Kanchipuram to Chola Nadu due to unbearable taxation, fines and punishments imposed upon them. Manuneedhi Cholan, the ruler of Chola Nadu, permitted them to settle in his domain. He conferred honours on the Nagarathar, such as Pradhana Vysya (principal traders), who are eligible to place the crown on the head of the prince at the time of the coronation. Subsequently, they were called Makuda Vysya in Chola Nadu. At this time, Kaveripoompattinam (the capital of Chola Nadu, now the village of Poompuhar in Thanjavur District) was a flourishing port. Around 8000 Chettiar families lived in Kaveripoompattinam and had prosperous businesses in the town. These Chettiar were loyal to the king. In course of time, they obtained an even higher title, Rathinadana Makuda Vysya, the Vysya who do business with precious stones.

After a century in Chola Nadu, the Chettiar faced a crisis. King Poovanti Cholan made advances to a Chettiar woman but she refused him, whereupon Poovanti Cholan began oppressing the community. He also massacred the Chettiar women and some Chettiar men. The remaining men gave up their lives in mass suicide. But some Chettiar boys escaped from this massacre. When Poovanti Cholan became old, he planned to conduct the coronation of his son, Rajabhushana Cholan. However, Poovanti Cholan could not forget the tradition that a Makuda Vysya should crown the prince. So he asked a Makuda Vysya youth to officiate at the coronation. The young man told him that as all the women of their community had been massacred, they had no women to marry. If a bachelor could crown the prince, he would do so. Poovanti Cholan discussed the matter with many elders. All suggested that the King arrange marriages between the Vysya men and the Vellala girls. After the intercommunity marriages had taken place on a mass scale, the Chettiar men conducted the coronation of Rajabhushana Cholan. When King Saundara Pandyan of Pandya Nadu requested his friend Rajabhushana Cholan for some good merchants of Chola Nadu to help improve trade in Pandya Nadu, Rajabhushana Cholan persuaded some Chettiar to migrate to the neighbouring Pandya kingdom. The Vysya merchants accepted the king's request on the condition that they should be permitted to go *en masse*. Rajabhushana Chola agreed and all the Vysya merchants migrated to the Pandya country. As promised, Saundara Pandyan allotted a well-defined territory in the Pandya country for the new Vysya merchants. The boundaries of their territory were the sea on the western side, the rivers Vaigai and Vellaru on the northern and southern sides respectively, and the Piranmalai mountains on the eastern side. There they built their first community centre, the Ilayataralkudi Nagaram, and the merchants who settled in that *nagaram* were called Nagarathar and became the Nattukkottai Chettiar.

The Nagarathar built a temple in Ilayatarankudi. But they were not satisfied with one temple and so they requested the Pandya king permission to build more temples. The king agreed to eight more temples; *viz.*, Mathur, Vairavanpatti,

Nemam, Iluppakkudi, Surakkudi, Velangudi, Pillaiyarpatti and Iraniyoor. The area encompassing these temples is the original territory of the Nagarathar in the Pandya country and is called Chettinadu today.

There is another version regarding the migration of the Chettiars from Chola Nadu to Pandya Nadu. Once, the river Kaveri flooded at Kaveripoompattinam. King Poovanti Cholan ordered all adult citizens of his kingdom to help in building a dam to safeguard the country from the flood. In that crucial period, the Nagarathar, who did not do manual labour, ignored the ruler's order. An enraged Poovanti Cholan started persecuting the Nagarathar. He abducted their women and massacared the men. The Nagarathar children were smuggled into the Pandya country by some of their neighbours and there they were brought up in what is today Chettinadu.

The Nagarthar are distributed in almost all the districts of Tamil Nadu as well as in a few neighbouring States, *viz.* Kerala, Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh. Some Nagarathar are settled in Burma, Malaysia, Singapore, Sri Lanka, Indonesia, Vietnam and Cambodia. However, their concentration is in Chettinadu, in the Pasumpon Muthuramalingam and Pudukkottai districts. Once, Chettinadu comprised of 96 villages, but now there are only 78 (Chandrashekar, 1980).

The Nagarathar population, according to the 1921 Census, was 40,500. The Nagarathar converse in Tamil among themselves and also with others. They use the Tamil script.

The Nagarathar are occasional nonvegetarian, but do not eat beef or pork. Many, however, are vegetarian and in some Nagarathar families both vegetarian and nonvegetarian live together. They consume all varieties of available vegetables, pulses, roots and tubers and fruit. Their staple food is rice. They use gingelly oil and ghee for cooking. Traditionally, none of them took alcoholic drinks or smoked *beedis* or cigarettes. But now some Nagarathar men do. They consume milk and milk products. They chew betel and use snuff.

The entire Nagarathar community has been divided into nine divisions based on the temple to which one is affiliated: Ilayathankudi, Mathur, Vairavanpatti, Nemam, Iluppakkudi, Surakkudi, Velangudi, Pillaiyairpatti and Iraniyoor. The first

are major *kovil* divisions, the others are minor *kovil* divisions. The major *kovil* divisions are further divided into different *udaiyars* (subtemple divisions). There is no hierarchical difference between the *kovil* divisions, irrespective of major or minor. So the Nagarathar are divided into 23 different groups. Each has affinity to a temple. The main function of the temple divisions is to regulate marriage alliances and for adoption. A family can adopt only a boy who belongs to the same temple (even upto the *udaiyar* division). The Nagarathar are aware of the *varna* system and consider themselves Vysyas.

The Nagarathar follow community level endogamy and clan (temple division) level exogamy. They practise both types of cross-cousin marriages (father's sister's daughter and mother's brother's daughter). Maternal uncle-niece marriages are very rare among the Nagarathar. Generally, boys get married between 21 and 25 years while girls get married between 18 and 22. Marriages are arranged by negotiation. The marital norm is monogamy. The marriage symbols of the community are the *thali* and *metti*. Dowry is paid in both cash and kind. It is said that the Nagarathar marriage is the most expensive marriage in Tamil Nadu, indicating the wealth of the community. But after the collapse of their businesses in Southeast Asia following independence coming to these countries, many Chettiar were reduced to dire financial straits. As a consequence, many marriages are conducted with limited dowry settlement. Within one year after marriage, the couple start a neolocal type of residence. Generally, all sons and their father live under one roof, but each family is a hearth group. Each man earns independently for his family. If they have a common business, each son and their father get their shares of the profits. Divorce is not permitted. Only widowers are allowed to remarry, not widows. Sororate is permitted. In recent times, a few couples have gone to court to get divorce. Hence, the community elders have started to solve the divorce problem by mutual agreement. The Nagarathar are now liberalising their rules of remarriage and divorce.

The nuclear family is the traditional norm among the Nagarathar. Traditional avoidance relationships between fathers-in-law and daughters-in-law and mothers-in-law and sons-

in-law are disappearing. Joking relationships are common between brothers-in-law as well as sisters-in-laws. Traditionally, they followed the male equigeniture rule of inheritance. Generally, property is not divided till the death of both the parents. If the father dies before the mother, the mother becomes the head of the family. The land and houses are equally shared by the sons. Diamonds and wooden furniture are also equally shared by the sons, while daughters equally share their parents' gold, vessels and some domestic goods. Their traditional *thali* consists of 32 pendants and weighs 100 sovereigns. Soon after the death of the mother, the children separate the 32 pendants from the *thali*. Some go to the sons, the rest to the daughters.

Nagarathar families with no sons follow a traditional form of adoption. They select a boy from their own *kovil* division (at minor temple level) for adoption. The adopted son called *manjure putran* (turmeric son), because he drinks turmeric water at the time of the adoption ceremony. The *manjure putran* has equal status and rights over his adopted parents' property, but he does not have rights to his biological parents' property.

Nagarathar women do not participate in the traditional economic activities. Nagarathar women have significant roles in social functions and religious rituals. They are said to have equal status with their men. They have decision-making powers in the family. Nowadays many Nagarathar women work in both government and private services. They generally take up only white-collar jobs.

The Nagarathar observe a pre-delivery ritual called *theertham sapidarathu* or *marunthu sapidarathu* during the fifth or seventh month of a woman's first pregnancy. The pregnant woman's sister-in-law or mother gives her *theertham* or *marunthu* (a herbal extract) to drink during the ceremony. After the ritual, the pregnant woman is taken to her mother's house for parturition. They observe birth pollution for 5-11 days. A ceremonial bath is given to the woman on the 5th, 7th, 9th or 11th day. On that day, they conduct a small function for the child, *viz.*, *thottil poduvathu* (placing the child in a cloth cradle). Both paternal and maternal relatives give the child gold or diamond

jewellery. They give one more ceremonial bath to the mother on the 16th day called *chattipanai kazhikirathu* (breaking of polluted pots). Only then is the mother is allowed to enter the kitchen. On the 16th day, the child's earlobes are bored. They conduct the naming ceremony on the 16th or 30th day. The couple take the child to their clan temple on the 30th day. On the 90th day, the woman goes back with her child to her husband's house.

Special rites are observed when a Nagarathar girl attains puberty. When a girl matures her grandmother or aunt is immediately called to pour holy turmeric water on her head. After that, the girl takes a bath and goes into seclusion in a part of the house. Pollution is observed for five to seven days. On the seventh day, they conduct a small ceremony, *veedukkadithal* (entering to home). A washerwoman is called to give a ceremonial bath to the girl. The Vannan woman also washes the clothes of the girl during the pollution period. They conduct a small function on the seventh evening. The girl's maternal uncle gives her a silk sari. All invitees give her gifts. From that day onwards, she wears a half-sari or a sari.

Nagarathar marriages were celebrated over three days in the past. Nowadays, the wedding is over within a day. As soon as the marriage alliance is fixed, the bridegroom's father and the bride's father sign a marriage agreement (*esaikudimanam*) on an auspicious day before the community elders. The agreement is also registered in their temple records. Besides this, they write a note on the type of dowry and the gifts to be exchanged at the time of marriage. Each party retains a copy of the agreement. Marriages are celebrated at the bride's residence. The expenditure for the marriage feast is borne by the bride's parents. A day before the marriage, both the bride and bridegroom go to their respective temples. The bridegroom wears toe-rings, earrings and turban. A copper coin which is dipped in turmeric powder is tied to the bridegroom's right wrist in a turmeric-stained cloth (*manjal kattu*).' The bride's parents display the gifts and dowry in their house and the bridegroom's party go and verify the gifts. On the wedding day, the couple get *kovil malai* (temple garlands) from their respective temples for the marriage. A *viravi* (Pandaram) brings

the *kovil malai* to the marriage *pandal*. A Brahman officiates at the marriage. But his job is only to light the *homam* (sacred fire) and chant the mantras. When the *muhurtham* comes, the Brahman leaves the dais and elders conduct the *thali*-tying. In the past, an old man was asked to tie the *thali* around the bride's neck. Nowadays, the bridegroom himself ties the *thali*. Later, the bridegroom's party takes the bride to their home. They conduct a small function there called *kulamvalam pillauedthal*, during which a small wooden doll and a small conch are placed in a swing and the new couple are asked to push it. Later, the bridegroom removes the *manjal kattu*, toe-rings and earrings. The consummation ceremony is at the bridegroom's residence on the night of the marriage.

Nagarathar marriages are generally conducted in their own homes in Chettinadu. Their *thali* is popularly known as *aimbadaithali* or *kalattiru*. The weight of the *thali* is now 21 sovereigns. Still, it is too heavy for daily wear, so a married woman wears only a small *thali* daily and wears the *kalattiru* only on special occasions.

When a death occurs among the Nagarathar, their caste messenger, *thandalkaran*, conveys the message to all the relatives. The head of the corpse is shaved and the body is bathed and clothed. The body is carried to the cremation ground in a chariot. An *andipandaram* (*thandalkaran*) pulls the chariot. The eldest son of the deceased, who lights the pyre, tonsures his head at the cremation site. On the day following the funeral, the sons of the deceased go to the cremation ground to collect the ashes and bones. A Parayan or Vettiyan takes out nine pieces of bones from the ashes. These are placed in a tin and kept in the cremation ground. On the fifth day, the bones are collected from the cremation ground and disposed of in a river. On the same day, milk and fruits are offered to the deceased at the cremation ground. After the disposal of the bones, a feast is served to the invitees. Death pollution ends with the disposal of the bones. On the 16th day after the death, the Nagarathar observe the final death rites (*karumathi* or *sapindi karma*). A vegetarian feast is served the relatives and gifts of cash and kind are given to the Brahmans. They observe *thithi* or *thivasam* (annual ceremony) after one year. They worship ancestors on some festival days.

Land is the main natural resource of the Nagarathar. It is mainly a landowning community with individual proprietorship. Traditionally, they were the moneylenders and traders. Their primary occupation at present is business and trade. Some of them have taken up a variety of white-collar jobs in both government and private sectors. Though it is mainly a landowning community, they do not engage in cultivation. They lease their land to other communities for cultivation.

The Nagarathar have an effective traditional caste council (*nagara kulam*) for different purposes. To the Nagarathar, the temple is more than a place of worship, writes Prof. Chandrasekhar (1980). Each temple has a council of elders and this council or committee of elders nominates one or more *karyakarar* (literally 'doers') who are in charge of the day-to-day management of the temple. In addition to the *karyakarar* who acts as *panchayathar*, each temple has an assistant called *vairayi* and an attendant called *thandalkaran* whose primary duty is to collect tax from the members of the temple for its maintenance. The temple council also settles various matters pertaining to the overall welfare of its clan. These issues may range from marriage contracts, monetary disputes and cases of debt to deviations from the accepted norms in the conduct and behaviour of the members. When the verdict is not accepted, the council enforces its decree first by refusing to give flower garlands (*kovil malai*) at the time of the marriages in these families (which means the marriage cannot be solemnised) and, secondly, by excommunication.

The Nagarathar are Saivites. Nowadays, most of them worship Vaishnava deities also. They are a highly religious-minded people. They keep some amount separately (*mahumai*) from their profits for religious activities. A newly married couple is recorded as a *pulli* in the temple records for the purpose of giving donations to the temple. There are two types of *pullis*, regular householders, who are 'full *pullis*' and widows without children and such people who are 'half *pullis*'. They conduct different religious functions in temples with the annual subscriptions received from the *pullis*'. Siva is their chief deity. Wherever the Nagarathar settle, even overseas, they first construct a temple for worship. The local Nagarathar temples,

apart from the nine major temples, play an important part in various village festivities. The Nagarathar celebrate all major Hindu festivals.

Traditionally, the Nagarathar do not accept water and food from the Scheduled Castes and servicing castes. However, they exchange water and food with the Brahman and other communities of equal status. However, most of them do not now practise traditional commensal norms. Traditionally, the Nagarathar had no marital relationships with any other community. However, a few intercommunity marriages have taken place recently. Traditionally, they are not supposed to share wells and water resources with inferior communities. They do not have such restrictions nowadays. They do not share cremation grounds with other communities. A patron-client relationship exists between the Nagarathar and Brahmans and a landlord-tenant relationship exists between the Nagarathar and agricultural communities.

The Nagarathar community has entrepreneurs and businessmen. Many of them continue in their traditional occupations, banking and trading. The community also has many scholars, creative artists, white-collar job-holders, teachers, administrators, doctors and engineers. Its members have reached all levels of political leadership.

The Nagarathar favour formal education for their children. Generally, they study up to college level. They use modern medicare. Their attitude towards family planning is positive. Couples prefer to have two children. They have access to all civic amenities. Most of them are engaged in employment or self-employment. They donate generously to temples and educational institutions.

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NAIR

The Nair also call themselves Nayammar. Among the Nair living in Tamil Nadu, the following subdivisions are still noticed: Illakkar, Padamangalam, Surupam, Karuvelam and Vilakuthalai. The Nair use such titles as Pillai, Panikkar, Thambi, Menon and Kurup, although Pillai is used more often than the others.

There are a number of conflicting accounts regarding the origin of the Nair. Some suggest that the term Nair was derived from the word Nayak or Nayakamar meaning 'leaders'. The present-day Nair settlements in Tamil Nadu formed part of Kerala before the reorganisation of States in 1956. The Nair of Tamil Nadu are proud to recollect their connections with the royal houses of Padmanabhapuram, the erstwhile capital of Travancore State. Padmanabhapuram, which is now in Tamil Nadu, houses the old palace. It can be historically established that the Nair served the rulers as commanders, ministers and soldiers. The community provided the manpower for the royal militia of the kings of Travancore and Cochin.

Nowadays, the Nair are distributed all over Tamil Nadu, but are concentrated in the Kanniyakumari District. They speak Malayalam. Most of the Nair living in Tamil Nadu are bilingual, speaking Tamil and Malayalam, and using both scripts.

The Nair of Tamil Nadu eat a diet more akin to that of their counterparts in Kerala than the local Tamil population. Their staple food is rice. *Kanji* (rice gruel) and *pasipayaru thoran* (a preparation made of greengram and coconut) continue to be the most common dishes in every home. Delicacies such as *puttu* (steamed rice flour eaten with flaked coconut, banana and sugar) and *aappam* (pancake, made out of fermented rice mix) are eaten for breakfast. They eat a lot of tubers, particularly tapioca. They drink a concoction called *karungali vellam* instead of water. This scented and disinfected water is made to a traditional herbal formula that includes *karungali* bark, *nerunji* (cumin) seed, clove and cardamom. Jack fruit and bananas are commonly eaten.

Traditional social differentiation on the basis of lineage and ritual ranks are on the wane among the Nair. Of the five subdivisions reported in Tamil Nadu, the Illakkar, Padmanagalam, Surpuam and Karuvelam are treated as hierarchically equal and intermarry while the Vilakuthalai Nair, who are traditionally barbers by occupation and owe ritual obligation to other Nairs, are treated as a lower subcaste and their marriage with other Nair groups is forbidden. On the agrarian class basis, the differentiation can be identified as large or medium landholders, small farmers and landless labourers.

The Nair has received wide attention because of its matrilineal, matrilocal kinship arrangements and the contractual marriage system that existed in the past. Today, the Nair follow a marriage pattern which in no way is different from the partiarchal, monogamous marriages, practised by other communities. Marriages are nowadays normally arranged by parents after matching horoscopes. Marriages between cross-cousins are permitted. Dowry is paid in cash and kind. Women wear the *thali* and use vermilion as symbols of marriage. The rule of residence is either patrilocal or neolocal. Divorce and remarriage take place according to secular-legal norms that prevail in the region.

Most of the traditional elements in familial and kin organisations of the Nair have been lost. The family system has assimilated many partriarchal elements in its structure and function. Extended kin organisations like the *kara* have lost much of their original significance and are more a loose caste association. The powerful institution of the *karanavar* has been reduced to a ritual succession of title, with some residual powers to arbiter on matters pertaining to religion and rituals. The legal norms governed by the Indian Succession Act have replaced traditional inheritance rules. However, a woman's claim to property is still intact.

The Nair observe pre-delivery rituals. The pregnant woman is taken to her mother's home during the seventh month of her pregnancy. After delivery, pollution is observed for 16 days and is terminated by the ritual of *satti panai thoduthal*. On the 41st day, the mother and child are taken to the husband's house. The naming ceremony is performed at the mother's

residence; the ritual is known as *irupathettu kettu* and includes tying a silk thread around the waist of the child.

On attaining puberty, a Nair girl is confined to a room for seven days. Ritual objects, such as an empty bushel, a fresh coconut spadix, paddy and an oil-lit lamp, are kept in the room along with her. On the fourth day, a ceremony called *nalukuzhi* is performed.

The Nair wedding is called *sambandam* and *pudavakodukkal*, suggestive of the old matrilineal system. The marriage generally takes place at the bride's house. The bridegroom arrives at her house, is received by the bride's elder brother and seated on a small plank (*manai*). Before him is kept a tray with eight ritual objects known as *ashtamangalyam*. They include an oil-lamp, a spadix of an arecanut tree, grains of raw rice, turmeric, *kumkum*, a piece of new and unbleached cloth, a mirror and a comb. The bride then comes escorted by the *ammavan* (her maternal uncle) and is made to sit to the left of the bridegroom. The bridegroom ties the marriage pendant (*minnu*) and the bridegroom and bride exchange garlands. Then a very important ceremony, *pudavakodukkal*, central to Nair marriages, follows. The literal meaning of the ceremony's name is 'giving the bride a sari'. The bride performs ritual obeisance to her husband and receives the *pudavai* (sari). The *kanyadhan* ceremony is also performed. The couple leave for the bridegroom's home after the marriage feast. Only vegetarian food is served during weddings.

The Nair cremate their dead. The body is bathed and laid out on a broad, freshly cut banana leaf. A ritual known as *vaikkarisi* is performed thereafter by putting rice on the mouth of the dead. The last rites are performed by the eldest son. Death pollution is observed for 16 days. On the third day after the death, a ritual offering, known as *baliburaimarappu*, is made to the departed soul. On the tenth day, the ashes are collected in two earthen pots (*sanjayanam*). One of the pots is buried in the garden, normally under a jack fruit tree. Pollution is terminated by performing the ritual *pulakuzhi*. On the first death anniversary, the second pot of ashes is taken either to the sea at Rameswaram, or to any nearby river, and the ashes are scattered in the water.

The Nair are a traditional landowning community, but they have now lost considerable control over their land. A number of them are landless labourers, who normally work in the rubber plantations of the Kulasekaram region. Except in the case of plantation labourers, the Nair agricultural labourers do not usually work for landlords of other castes.

The old Nair institutions, such as the *tharavad* and *karanavar* and neighbourhood groups such as the *kara*, have completely lost their traditional role of social control. The *kara*, according to Kathleen Gough (1960) acted in the past almost as a caste council with power to award sanctions. Now, the *karayogam* acts like a modern caste association.

The Nair are Hindus. Their religious tradition reflects the assimilation of both main stream Hinduism as well as local traditions. Sastha or Ayyappan is their most important local deity. Worship at the Kumarankoil Murugan temple, Thookam worship at Kollengode, Pongala for Attuka Devi at Thiruvananthapuram are examples of continuing local religious traditions. They also worship Siva and Vishnu. Their main pilgrim centres are Sabarimalai (Ayyappan), Guruvayur (Krishnan), Chottanikara (Bhagavati) and Thiruvananthapuram (Sri Padmanabha). Onam is their most important festival. It is celebrated in the Malayalam month of *Chingam*, upon the appearance of the Thiruvonam star. In the Malayalam month of *Dhanu*, Thiruvathirai festival is celebrated. This particularly relates to women. Vishu is celebrated in the month of *Medam*.

Some of the Nair folk-arts, such as Pulikali, Onakkali, Onathallu, Oonjalattam, Kummikali, Kaikottikali, Kolattam, Thumbi Thullal are still preserved. The songs sung during these performances reveal the folk memory of the community.

The Nair are one of the most progressive and forward-looking communities of the Kanniyakumari District. They have availed of the opportunities created by modern education. The Malayalee Samajam, with its 42 branches in the district, works for the betterment of the community. The Nair exhibits a high level of responsiveness to modernisation and literacy. They are

health-conscious and hygienic. Many Nair are employed in white-collar jobs.

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NAMDEV MARATHA

The Namdev Maratha are also called Bhavasara Kshatriya. They are the descendants of Namdev, a Maratha saint. They originally belong to Maharashtra. The term Maratha refers to their native land Maharashtra. As Stuart (in Thurston, 1909) rightly pointed out, "Marathi is somewhat open to confusion, and it is probable that many people of various castes, who speak Marathi, are shown as being of that caste". But a few Marathas who followed certain saints were and are referred by other communities as Marathas of the concerned saints. The Namdev Maratha who follow the teachings of Saint Namdev maintain a separate caste identity within the Maratha community in Tamil Nadu. The term 'Bhavasara' refers to their Kshatriya origin. They have occupational names, *viz.*, Chimpage and Rangarache. The meaning of 'Chimpage' is 'tailor' and 'Rangarache' is 'dyer'. Their traditional occupations are tailoring and dyeing. They were the garment-makers for royal families during the Maratha reign. Their men use the title Rao, and their women, Bai.

Thurston (1909) narrates the origin and history of the Namdev Maratha community thus: "They claim to be Kshatriyas, who accompanied Rama in his conquest of Ceylon, from which fact one of their names, Langari (Lanka, the island, *i.e.* Ceylon) is said to be derived. Rama, for some reason or other, became incensed against and persecuted them. Most were destroyed but a respectable Kshatriya lady saved her two sons by taking off their sacred threads and causing one to pretend that he was a tailor sewing and the other that he was a dyer colouring his thread with the red betel nut and leaf which she hurriedly supplied out of her mouth. The boys became the progenitors of the caste, the members of which now wear the thread. The descendants of the one brother are tailors and of the other, the most numerous, dyers."

The Namdev Maratha migrated from Maharashtra to the south about 300 years ago and settled in Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka. They claim that they were the soldiers in the army of Chatrapati Shivaji and came with him on his expedition to the South. They are distributed all over Tamil

Nadu, mainly in the districts of Thanjavur, North Arcot Ambedkar, South Arcot and Madras. They speak Marathi among themselves and Tamil with others. They use the Tamil script. Some of them know the Devanagari script too. In the past, they wore turbans regularly, but now they wear it only during weddings. Their women wear an ornament around their necks called *kasugal gundugal kala pothugal*. It is worn by married women from the third month after marriage. It consists of small, thin gold discs, gold and black beads besides the *garsoli* (*thali*). They have a yellow flag with a red swastika emblem which is hoisted at the time of marriages and religious ceremonies.

The Namdev Maratha are nonvegetarian, who do not eat pork or beef. Their staple food is rice. They also eat wheat regularly. They eat all varieties of pulses, vegetables, roots and tubers. They use groundnut oil for cooking. They consume milk and milk products and eat all varieties of fruit. A few men take alcoholic drinks. In the past it was customary for them to offer liquor at their feasts. This is not seen now. They chew betel, some of them smoke *beedis* and cigarettes and use snuff. They have special foods, like *thelichi*, prepared with rice flour and wheat flour and *bakar*, prepared with rice flour, which are served during feasts.

There are several rishi *gotras* and *pattams* (surnames) among the Namdev Maratha. Some of the *gotras* are Goutama Rishi *gotra*, Ganga Rishi *gotra* and Gundala Maha Rishi *gotra*. Limkar, Merkar, Lakundae, Sutke, Thelkar and Rampurae are some of the *pattams* (surnames). The *gotras* and *pattams* govern their marital alliances. They are aware of the Hindu *varna* system and consider themselves Kshatriyas.

The Namdev Maratha follow endogamy at the community level. The exogamous *pattams* and *gotras* govern their marital alliances. The *pattam* and *gotra* of the bride and bridegroom must be different. Consanguinity (cross-cousins only) is common among them. They marry either the father's sister's daughter or mother's brother's daughter. Maternal uncle-niece marriages are also permitted. Their boys marry when around 20 years of age and girls around 18. The marriage symbols are the *garsoli* (*thali*) and toe-rings. From the third month after

the marriage, the women wear *kasugal gundugal kala pothugal* necklace. Bride-price (*parisam*) is given in kind at the time of the betrothal ceremony. Dowry too is given in kind. They follow the patrilocal rule of residence after marriage. Divorce is not permitted. Widow remarriage, widower remarriage and sororate are permitted.

Both nuclear and joint families exist among the Namdev Maratha. A joking relationship is permitted among brothers-in-law and between grandparents and grandchildren. Traditionally, property was inherited only by sons, equally, but nowadays daughters also are given shares. The eldest son succeeds as the head of the family after his father's death.

Namdev Maratha women have a secondary social status. They do all the household work. Some of them are now employed in government service. They participate in all social and religious activities along with their men.

The Namdev Maratha observe the pre-delivery ritual *valaikappu* for a woman at her husband's house during the seventh or ninth month of her first pregnancy. On an auspicious day, her mother brings her new clothes, bangles, sweets, fruit, sandal and *kumkum*. The pregnant woman wears new clothes and bangles brought by her mother. She is then made to sit on a plank in her house. The elders apply sandal paste on her and bless her for safe confinement. Sweets are distributed to all the invitees and the neighbourhood. She is then taken to her natal home. They observe birth pollution for 10-15 days, as prescribed by the priest, according to the child's horoscope. On the 10th or 15th day, they give ceremonial baths to both the mother and child. *Punyadanam* (ceremonial purification) is performed to mark the end of the pollution period. The naming ceremony is conducted on the same day. Tonsuring and earlobe-boring are performed at the end of first year or in the third year.

The Namdev Maratha observe puberty pollution for ten days, during which the girl is kept in seclusion. On the tenth day, she is given a ceremonial bath. Her maternal uncle gives her a sari and cosmetics. Elders apply sandal paste on her and bless her. This ritual is called as *manjal neerattu vizha*.

The Namdev Maratha marriage rituals start with *soyirik*

(betrothal), during which the marital alliance is formally confirmed by exchange of betel by the bride's and bridegroom's families. The wedding takes place in a public *mandapam* or the bride's residence and is spread over two days. On the first day, the bridegroom goes to the temple. From there, he goes to the bride's residence. In the house, Bhavani Amman Puja is performed. Five *sumangalis* (women whose husbands are alive) bring water in five *kudams* (metal pots) and place them in front of the bridegroom. The *sumangalis* then do *arati* to the bridegroom. The water brought by the *sumangalis* is used for the bridegroom's *mangala snanam* (auspicious bath). Gondal Puja is next performed. In this ritual, the *garsoli* (*thali*) is blessed. That night, they hold a procession in which the bridegroom rides on a horse. After the procession, the *laginchita* (black gem) is tied around the neck of the bride by the bridegroom. On the second day, another procession is conducted. The bride and bridegroom then sit in the marriage *pandal*. Vinayaka Puja is performed, during which the bridegroom wears the sacred thread. Then, *kanyadanam*, indicating giving away of the bride, is performed. The bride and bridegroom exchange garlands. The *thali* is now tied around the neck of the bride by the bridegroom amidst auspicious music and elders throwing *akshitha* (turmeric-stained rice). The ritual of *varmai* takes place in which the faces of the bride and bridegroom are shown to the mother of the bridegroom in milk and in a mirror. Till then she is not allowed to see the bride and bridegroom. Lastly, gifts are given to the couple. A feast is arranged on the occasion by the bride's parents. The consummation ceremony is arranged on the same day at the bridegroom's residence. During the third month after the marriage, the bride is taken to her parents' residence for a ceremony in which the *laginchita* is removed and the *kasugal gundugal kala pothugal* chain is given to her to wear.

The Namdev Maratha dead are either buried or cremated according to the individual family's tradition. The body is bathed and dressed in new clothes. Then it is carried to the cremation or burial ground on a *padai* (bier) by close relatives. The eldest son, who performs the death rites, carries fire in a small mud pot and walks before the *padai*. After the com-

pletion of the cremation or burial, all the sons are tonsured. They then bathe in a river or tank, before returning home. The next day they go to cremation ground and collect the bones and ashes. They dispose of them in a river or tank. They observe death pollution for ten days. They perform *pindam* puja on the tenth day, which they refer to as *karumathi*. *Punyadanam* (ceremonial purification) is done to mark the end of pollution. On the same evening, new clothes are given to all the sons of the deceased by their brothers-in-law. After one year, they perform *thithi*, the annual death ritual. They worship their ancestors.

The traditional occupation of the Namdev Maratha is tailoring and dyeing, which many still continue. Their children also help in the tailoring. A few of them have cultivable lands. Some of them now do agricultural labour and other labour. Others are employed in government service.

The Namdev Maratha caste association, which is a registered body looks after the welfare of the community. The office-bearers of the association are its president, secretary, cashier and committee members, elected by secret ballot. The term of their office is three years. The functions of the committee are to look after the general welfare of the community, oversee marriage and death rituals and organise religious festivals. They impose cash fines on the guilty when settling disputes. They help to settle property disputes. They give scholarships to meritorious students.

The Namdev Maratha worship Amba Bhavani as their tutelary deity. The Brahman officiate at birth, marriage and death rituals. They celebrate all Hindu festivals. They conduct a two-day festival twice a year, in the months of January and November, called Bhavani Amman Puja and Renuka Devi Puja respectively. They also perform Vana Puja in the month of *Adi* (June) every year. On Avani Avittam day, they celebrate the Janeu (sacred thread) Festival.

The Namdev Maratha accept water and cooked food from all the communities except the Scheduled Castes. They share wells and cremation grounds with other communities. They visit all the Hindu shrines. They participate in all traditional festivals and festivities. The celebration of the Swamimalai

temple festival is managed by them. They receive the services of the barber and washerman. They maintain cultivator-labour and employer-worker relationships. The Namdev Maratha has businessmen, teachers, doctors, engineers, advocates, defence personnel and political leaders at the municipal council level.

The Namdev Maratha educate their children. Students drop out from school due to poverty. They favour modern medicare and family planning. They have access to all civic amenities.

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NANJIL MUDALI

The Nanjil Mudali also known as Sakkaravar, Kavathi, Maruthuvar, Navithar and Pandithar. They are mainly confined to the Kanniyakumari District. They are a small section of the Sakkaravar community, the traditional barbers of the Nadar, who organised themselves under a new identity, Nanjil Mudali, in the early 1970s. The term 'Nanjil' represents the region (traditionally known as Nanjilnadu or Nanjanadu) where this community lives, while the term 'Mudali' signifies the title of a weaver community. It is reported by some members of the Kerala Mudali community that the Nanjil Mudali emerged as a community as the result of a feud between leaders of the Sakkaravar and Kerala Mudali during the early 1970s. A few leaders of the Sakkaravar, to show that they had equal status with the Kerala Mudali, chose a similar kind of identity for themselves, namely Nanjil Mudali.

It is said that, some of the Malayalam speaking barbers who took up the profession of weaving, identified themselves as Kerala Mudali. In the same direction, the Sakkaravar who took up the profession of weaving, started identifying themselves Nanjil Mudali. Although a few cases of intermarriage have taken place between the Nanjil Mudali and the Kerala Mudali, the two remain distinct communities. It is now observed that the Nanjil Mudali are trying to identify themselves as the Maruthuvar or the Navithar.

The Nanjil Mudali speak Tamil among themselves and with others. Many of them are also conversant with Malayalam. They use the Tamil script. It is a common feature among old women of this region, regardless of their community, to wear *pampadam*, a heavy ear-stud.

The Nanjil Mudali are nonvegetarian, but avoid eating beef and pork. Fish and tapioca form the main ingredients of their diet. Their staple foodgrain is rice supplemented with locally available roots, vegetables and pulses. Coconut and plantain, which are grown in abundance in the region, are also part of their regular diet. Coconut oil is used for cooking. Men take alcoholic drinks occasionally. Chewing betel leaves and

arecanut with tobacco is common among both men and women.

Community endogamy is the norm among the Hindu section, while, the Christian converts among the Nanjil Mudali sometimes seek marital alliances with other community members belonging to the same denomination. Between the Christian and Hindu sections of the Nanjil Mudali, no hierarchy is maintained. Exogamous clans, such as Salai *illam*, Sakravarthi *illam*, Valai *illam* and Eula *illam* regulate marital alliances among them. The word *illam* means 'house' in Tamil. Mates are acquired usually by negotiation. Cross-cousin and maternal uncle-niece marriages are allowed. The symbols of marriage for the Hindus among them are the *thali* (with a gold pendant inscribed with the image of a conch shell, *i.e. sankhu* or the word 'Om' in Tamil). The Christians among them, particularly those belonging to C.S.I. denomination, wear only the *thali*, with the gold pendant inscribed with the cross (*siluvai*). On the day of a Christian betrothal, the bridegroom puts a gold ring on the bride's finger. The marriage takes place in church. Among the Hindus, marriage is conducted in the bride's home or in a public hall and a priest from their own community officiates. It is customary on the part of the bridegroom's sister to give the *thali* to her brother to tie around the neck of the bride. Dowry in kind is given to the bridegroom by the bride's parents among Christian converts as well as Hindus. The rule of residence after marriage is patrilocal. Remarriage of widows, widowers and divorcees are allowed among both sections.

Both nuclear as well as vertically extended families are found among the Nanjil Mudali. Male equigeniture is the rule of inheritance. They follow matrilineal descent. The clan (*illam*) of the mother is passed on to her children. The eldest son in the family succeeds his father as the head of the family.

Nanjil Mudali women generally do not inherit any property. They work as wage labourers in handloom units, rubber plantations and agricultural fields and contribute to the family income.

On the birth of a child among the Nanjil Mudali Hindus, pollution is observed for 16 days, after which the mother is allowed to resume her duties. Tonsuring and ear-piercing

ceremonies are conducted after nine months. Naming is done within 41 days of the birth of the child.

When a Nanjil Mudali girl attains puberty, she is secluded in a corner of the house. After observing 16 days of pollution (some of them observe seven or nine days of pollution), *i.e.* *kanni theettu* (*kanni* means 'virgin' and *theettu* means 'pollution'), the puberty ceremony (*theeratti*) is conducted in the house itself. Among the Christians, the priest of the local church comes to the house of the girl on this day to conduct prayers.

Among the Nanjil Mudali Hindus, marriage is arranged only after matching of the horoscopes of the spouses. The *thali* and the marriage sari are purchased by the bridegroom's parents. The tying of the *thali* around the neck of the bride by the bridegroom and exchange of garlands by the couple are the important rituals. Consummation of marriage takes place in the bride's house.

Both the Hindus and Christians among the Nanjil Mudali bury their dead. On the 7th, 9th, 11th, 13th and 15th day after death, a ritual called *adiyendiram* is conducted. A tombstone (*kallarai*) is raised on the burial site and coconut milk is sprinkled over it. The ritual ends with the offering of food to the poor (*adiyendiram soru*). Ancestors are worshipped annually. Food and clothes are offered to the ancestors and the tombstone is painted on this day.

Most Nanjil Mudali are landless. Some of them still serve as barbers to the Nadar, thus continuing their traditional practice. Some have established hairdressing saloons in towns nearby. Many have given up their traditional occupation and are labourers in rubber plantations, handloom units and agricultural fields. Petty business and masonry have been taken up by a few. Wages are paid both in cash and grains.

The Nanjil Mudali community association, which was so active during the early 1970s, is almost defunct now. The formal village panchayat exercise social control in all their villages. Intracommunity as well as intercommunity disputes are nowadays taken to judicial courts and police stations for settlement.

The Christian converts among the Nanjil Mudali celebrate Christian festivals and visit sacred centres such as Velankanni annually. The Hindus worship Bhadrakali Amman and Sastha as their chief deities. Other deities of the wider pantheon are also worshipped. Their own community priest (*poosari*) conducts life-cycle rituals and worship. In the Tamil month of *Panguni*, they celebrate a festival called Bhadrakali Amman Kodai in their villages.

The Nanjil Mudali are traditional musicians, *i.e. nadaswaram* players and drum (*melam*) beaters for temple festivities and the marriages and death ceremonies of neighbouring communities. They are a servicing community of the Nadar by tradition, but except for a few, the rest have stopped performing such services. The few who continue this work, shave the heads of the chief mourners in the case of death in Nadar families, dig graves for burials, make hearths (*aduppu*) for large-scale cooking at Nadar marriages, and hold an umbrella over the Nadar bridegroom's head when he goes to the bride's house. They are paid in cash and kind for their services. They share drinking water sources with other communities. Their burial sites are generally their own gardens. Those who do not own any ground share burial grounds with others.

The Nanjil Mudali favour formal education, modern medicare and family planning. Boys are sent to colleges for higher education while girls attend schools usually upto the secondary level. All civic and government facilities are available to them.

C.R. SATHYANARAYANAN

NARIKORAVAR

The Narikoravar are distributed throughout Tamil Nadu. They live in rural areas, towns, cities and pilgrim centres. They are known as Oosikoravar because they sell needles (*oosi*) and beads, and Kuruvikkaran, as they trap birds (*kuruvi*). *Nari* in Tamil means fox. They trap small animals such as the fox and mongoose and sell their teeth as charms. Some of them use the title Singh.

The Narikoravar do not remember the place of their origin, but they have apparently lived in the Tamil country for several generations. Their own language Vagriboli, is related to Rajasthani, Marathi and Gujarati. It is believed that they originally migrated from Rajasthan.

According to their oral tradition, the ancestors of the Narikoravar were hunters in the forests. A legend narrates that, once, a group of them came across the epic heroine Sita and laughed at her. This annoyed Sita and she cursed them to be poor and struggle for a livelihood. The Narikoravar are said to be the descendants of these cursed ancestors.

The Narikoravar speak Vagriboli among themselves. They speak Tamil or Telugu or Hindi with others. They don't have a script of their own. The educated among them write in Tamil.

It is not difficult to identify a Narikoravar couple. The man wears a loin cloth and a turban-like headgear. Often, he is seen with a dirty cloth on his shoulder which is put to multiple use, such as for carrying a sleeping child, collecting food or grains given as alms and, at night, as a bedsheet. Many of them keep their hair long and tie it in a knot at the back of the head. Both men and women are tattooed on their arms, chests, thighs, legs and shoulders.

The Narikorathi (a woman of the community) wears a short skirt, reaching just below the knees, and an abbreviated blouse. She also wears a short length of cloth across her body, and over a shoulder to cover her bosom. Sometimes she ties the ends of this cloth and carries her child in the sling formed. Both men and women wear many strands of beads as necklaces. The women wear glass and lead bangles, lead rings, some ear

and nose ornaments and copper toe-rings. The Narikorathi usually carries a shoulder bag in which she keeps her stock of beads and bead necklaces, needles and simple tools which she uses to string the beads.

The Narikoravar are nomadic for the most part of the year. They pitch a low tent, usually in the outskirts of the villages they visit and cook in the open fields. They sleep in the open as long as there is no rain. They keep their few possessions, inside their tents and the smaller children also sleep in them.

The Narikoravar are regular nonvegetarian. They eat pork and game. Their lifestyle is generally unhygienic, but they appear very healthy. They drink tea and coffee. Both men and women are fond of alcoholic drinks. Men smoke *beedis* and cigarettes. They chew betel leaves with nuts and tobacco.

The Narikoravar have five patrilineal exogamous lineages, namely Pawaar, Dabiwala, Kalka Devi, Makaji and Navilwala. They had twelve *gotras,* of which they could remember only four: Kasingwala, Singidiwala, Govindawala and Ramowala. They are also exogamous. Both lineages and *gotras* regulate marriage alliances. There is no hierarchy among these *gotras* or lineages and all are considered equal.

Endogamy at the community level and exogamy at the lineage and *gotra* levels are the rules of marriage among the Narikoravar. In the past, they did not encourage marriage with a sister's daughter or father's sister's daughter or mother's brother's daughter. But nowadays such marriages are allowed. In the past, they practised child marriages but not now. Marriage by elopement and marriage by negotiation are the modes of acquiring mates. Monogamy is the marital norm. They wear black bead necklaces and smear soot on their teeth as symbols of marriage.

In negotiated marriages, the Narikoravar practise the custom of bride-price, which includes cash (Rs.24 in the past, and Rs.200-500 now), as well as drinks and food for the assembled. Divorce and remarriage of the divorcee are common. Either spouse can initiate the divorce. Their caste panchayat hears the grievances and allows the divorce. If the man asks for a divorce, he has no claim for compensation. But if a woman asks for a divorce, she has to return half the money that her

parents received as bride-price. Every woman, whether a widow or a divorcee or unmarried, gets a man to marry her, but the bride-price for an unmarried girl is more than the bride-price for a widow or a divorcee. The children of a divorced couple live either with the mother or the father.

Both nuclear and extended (vertical or horizontal) families exist among the Narikoravar. Mother-in-law and son-in-law maintain a formal relationship and it is the same between daughter-in-law and father-in-law. But a joking relationship prevails between the elder brother's wife and husband's younger brother, a man and his wife's younger or elder sister, and grandchildren and grandparents. Elders in the community, particularly men, expect to be respected and not challenged. Sons inherit the property of their father. The eldest son succeeds to the office of his father, if the father had held an office such as headman of the panchayat or community priest.

Narikoravar women enjoy almost equal status with their men. They string beads and sell the necklaces.

No pre-delivery rituals or restrictions are observed. Older Narikoravar women attend to childbirths. As the Narikoravar do not have a proper house to live in, childbirth is conducted in the open, with some women holding up a cloth or mats as a screen. The woman in labour is given either arrack or toddy to bear the pain. Soon after the birth of the child, they give the new mother a small quantity of dry ginger and jaggery pounded together. In the past, birth pollution was observed for three months, but now they observe it for only ten days. After the pollution period, both the mother and the child are bathed and dressed in new clothes. They tonsure a child three times when it is three-months-old. After that, the child does not have a haircut again. The women do the tonsuring. The eldest male member of the camp names the child.

Puberty rites are observed for adolescent Narikoravar girls. They keep the girl in a separate tent and an elderly woman keeps her company during the night. Puberty entails pollution for five days. During this period, the girl is given every morning a banana, an ounce of gingelly oil and an egg. During the day, they give her a special diet. On the sixth day, the girl is given a bath with water in which they mix urmeric powder. They do not serve any feast.

Marriage by elopement is a socially accepted form among the Narikoravar. After some time, when the couple return to the camp to live with their people, they give them enough money for drinks and rations. Yet they are looked down upon by the community. In the negotiated marriage, the boy's family takes the initiative. The bride-price that is agreed upon by the two parties depends on the girl's looks and her capacity to make beautiful bead necklaces. Well before the date of marriage, the bridegroom's family buy new clothes for the bride and her family members. On the day of the marriage, the bridegroom's party buy rice, provisions and vegetables for the marriage feast and toe-rings, glass bangles and toilet articles for the bride. During the day, they drink toddy or arrack and in the evening they worship their lineage deities in their respective tents. The priest from the bridegroom's side blesses both the bride and bridegroom. They are then made to sit in front of their respective tents and women bathe them with turmeric-mixed water. Next, they wear new clothes and sit together. They are given some gingelly oil and soot in their palms, and are asked to apply them on their teeth to blacken them. Traditionally, either the mother or the sister of the bridegroom used to tie the black bead necklace around the bride's neck. But nowadays, in some families, the bridegroom ties the black bead necklace. After all these rituals, the bride and bridegroom return to their respective tents. The next morning, they are made to sit on a mud platform in front of their respective tents. All the married women in the camp apply turmeric on the cheeks of the bride and bridegroom. Meantime, each Narikoravar family in the camp is given rice, vegetables, salt, spices and fish sufficient for the number in each family, to cook their own meal. Drinks are supplied to all by the bridegroom. Then they bring the food they have cooked to the bridegroom's tent, where ghee and jaggery are made available. All the families share the cooked food. The consummation ceremony takes place in the bride's parents' tent. The next day, the couple return to bridegroom's parents' tent. They establish a new tent for themselves, though they share the hearth.

The Narikoravar bury their dead. They pay the Irular Rs.15-

25 to dig the grave. They usually carry the body on a bier to the burial ground. The wife of the deceased removes her black bead necklace and places it on the chest of the corpse before it is taken for burial. They observe death pollution for 15 days. After this, the widow is free to marry again. On the 16th day, each member of the family places a handful of rice on a big leaf. They pour curry on the rice heap and keep some toddy or arrack beside it. They offer this meal to the departed and then eat and drink themselves. They worship their deities within one year or some time 15 days after the death.

Trapping of birds and hunting small animals is the traditional occupation of the Narikoravar. They are experts in imitating the cries of birds.

The Narikoravar have a traditional caste panchayat headed by an elderly man whose office is hereditary. His verdict in any dispute including divorce is final. He imposes cash fine on the guilty.

The Narikoravar are Hindus. They worship Madurai Meenakshi, Kamakshi, Ellamma, Siva, Ganesh, Kali, Durga and Mariyamma. Their lineages are formed on the basis of the deity, they worship. The Pawar subgroup sacrifices buffalo to their deity while the others sacrifice only goats. The priests are from their own community. The elders in the family conduct various life-cycle rituals, while the deity's worship is officiated at by priests.

The Narikoravar have an oral tradition. It includes folk-tales and folk-songs which describe their past.

The Narikoravar accept water and food from all other communities. But other communities do not accept water and food from them. They do not share their burial ground with other communities. They have their own deities, and do not participate in the regional festivals and festivities. There are a few teachers from this community.

Though the Narikoravar favour formal education, the children are not serious about studying, because of their nomadism. They have their own traditional medicines for all ailments. Of late, they also use allopathic medicines as these are available at the rural health centres. They do not favour family planning. Couples prefer to have four or more children

because of the high rate of infant mortality. They avail of public facilities in the places near where they camp. As they live in tents, they have no need of electricity. They use firewood and cowdung cakes as fuel. They have no ration cards. They are dependent on moneylenders for credit.

RAJALAKSHMI MISHRA

NAWAIYAT

The Nawaiyat are also known as Nawayath, Nawayat, Navayath, Nawaits and Navyath. In Tamil Nadu most Nawaiyat live in Madras. Various opinions have been expressed regarding the origin of the Nawaiyat. The Nawaiyat are said to have migrated from Arabia to India during the 13th Century. Some feel that people of Nayit, a suburb of Basra, are the Nawaiyat. Others think they were sailors by profession, because *nute* in Arabic means sailor. Still others believe the term 'Nawaiyat' means 'come' or 'comers'.

The Nawaiyat themselves trace their origin from Nadir bin Kanana, the supreme ancestor of Prophet Mohammed. They believe their ancestors came from Arabia. Due to the oppression and cruelty of their rulers, their ancestors migrated to India and other parts of the world. When the group reached the shores of India, they concealed their faith and adopted a different way of life to please the Hindu kings; then they started spreading the Mohammedan faith. Later, they spread all over India.

The Nawaiyat now speak Urdu, but before their migration to India, their language was Arabic. They wear the *kasava*, a long garment reaching the ankles and worn over the pyjamas. This garment has now been replaced by a shorter *kurta* (upper garment). Men also wear trousers and shirts now. The traditional dress worn by the women is the *lugada*, a petticoat with silver embroidery. It is worn along with a *choli* (blouse) and *dupatta* (an upper cloth). This has now been replaced by the *salwar-kameez* and sari.

The Nawaiyat are nonvegetarian, but do not eat pork or buffalo meat. Their staple food is rice, but wheat is also consumed. Cereals, pulses, vegetables, tubers and fruit are all eaten. They use groundnut oil and ghee for cooking. They are fond of milk and milk products. They also drink tea and coffee, but not alcoholic drinks. They chew betel leaves and tobacco, and use snuff. The men smoke cigarettes.

There are more than 70 subgroups among the Nawaiyat. A few of them are Palekar, Ghiyas, Bandae, Jadi, Shakir, Salati,

Most Nawaiyat live in nuclear families. Joking relations are permitted between a man and his wife's sister and other consanguineal and affinal relatives. There is no avoidance relationship among them, but women generally do not come in front of male strangers. Inheritance is according to Islamic law as laid down in the Koran. Both sons and daughters have rights to property. Of the total property, one-eighth is given to the wife and the rest is distributed among the children; sons get twice as much as daughters. The eldest son succeeds the father as the head of the family.

Nawaiyat women participate in all social and religious activities with their menfolk. In the past, women were not allowed to write, but could read. Now most women are well educated and some are employed as doctors, engineers and teachers. Women contribute to the family income and also participate in decision-making. The women were once strict followers of the purdah system and covered themselves with a veil; very few women observe purdah today.

The Nawaiyat observe many pre-delivery rituals. In *chowmasa*, during the fourth month, the pregnant woman is adorned with flowers and all the womenfolk present apply turmeric on her face and body. Then a feast is given to all. In the seventh month, the pregnant woman is sent to her mother's place and *sathmasa* is conducted, in which seven types of vegetables, betel and money are tied in a cloth and put on her lap after which a feast is served. And then, in the ninth month, the *nowmasa* ritual is observed. After the birth of the child, the muezzin (priest) is informed and he renders the *azan* (the call for prayer). Sweets are distributed to all relatives and friends. On the sixth day, the *cheti ka rasam* ritual is observed. Both, the mother and the child are dressed in new clothes and sweets are distributed. The naming ceremony (*naam rakahe*) is on the 11th day after delivery. The name is chosen by the paternal grandparents and a sweet.(*batasa*) is prepared and distributed to all relatives and friends. The mother does not come in front of any male relative during the forty days of pollution. On the fortieth day, the *chillae ki rasam* ritual is performed to remove pollution.

The Nawaiyat observe the *aqiqa* (tonsuring) ceremony on the fortieth day or some time after the fortieth day. The child's head is shaved and the hair is weighed in silver, the worth of which, in cash, is distributed to the poor. If it is a male child, two goats are sacrificed, and if it is a female child, one. When the child is four months old, a ritual (*firni*) is conducted in which it is fed a sweet (*chatane ki rasam*). When the child is four years four months and four days old, a very important ritual (*maktab*) is observed. The child is dressed in new clothes and flowers and has to recite a verse from the Koran along with the priest. Sweets are distributed after the ritual. The ear-piercing ceremony is performed for girls when they are five or later. Their noses are also pierced and a nose-stud (*nath*) is worn. Boys undergo circumcision (*kathna*) before they reach the age of 12.

When a Nawaiyat girl attains puberty, she is kept in seclusion for 11 days. On the 11th day, she is bathed and dressed in new clothes and adorned with flowers. All female relatives apply turmeric and sandalwood paste on her face, neck and arms. A feast is then served.

The Nawaiyat are an endogamous group, but, of late, have not been so rigid in their intergroup marriages. Parallel and cross-cousins are the potential mates for a person. Maternal uncle-niece marriage is prohibited, so too sororal polygyny. A man can take another wife if the earlier one is either barren or ill to the extent of not being able to lead a conjugal life. The age at marriage for a girl is 18-22 years, for boys 21-27. The most common type of marriage is by negotiation. Marriage involving the exchange of sisters is also common. It is called 'dual relationship' (*doohara samdhava*). The symbol of marriage is the *lacha* (chain of black beads), which is tied by the bridegroom's mother around the neck of the bride at the time of the marriage. Apart from this, toe-rings and a silver ring are also worn. A married woman should always wear bangles (*kangan*) which are another symbol of the marital status. Dowry is not compulsory, but is gaining ground due to the influence of other communities. *Mehar*, paid by the bridegroom to the bride, is given on the marriage day, or at any time later or whenever demanded by the wife. *Mehar* paid at the time of

marriage is called *mehar movjal*, while *mehar* paid later is *mehar movajal*. The *mehar* among the Nawaiyat is fixed as 39 or 40 tolas of standard gold. Patrilocal residence is the norm.

In the past, a Nawaiyat wedding lasted for about ten days, but it has now been reduced to four days. A ritual called *haldi* (turmeric) or *manje ki rasam* is performed two days prior to the marriage. The bride-to-be is bathed and dressed in yellow- or cream-coloured clothes and made to sit in the middle of the room, where women then apply turmeric paste on her face, neck and arms. A feast is served. The same ceremony is performed for the bridegroom in his house. The next day, the clothes and ornaments chosen for the bride by the bridegroom's parents are sent to her. The bride's sister or a cousin, with other relatives, then go to the bridegroom's house with a variety of dishes, and the bride's sister applies *mehendi* (henna) on the bridegroom's finger and demands from him certain gifts. This ritual is called *mehendi ki barat* or *mehendi ki rasam*. The next day is the day of the marriage or *nikah*, which is usually held in the girl's house or in some public place. The bridegroom's wears the clothes sent by the bride's family and, accompanied by his relatives, goes to the place of the *nikah*. The bridegroom's is then adorned with flowers in a ritual known as *shabgush ki rasam*. The bride is made to sit in the centre of the hall with a veil over her head. After the arrival of the *barat* (the bridegroom's party), the *khazi* reads the details of the two families and the amount of *mehar* fixed. Then two relatives, one from either side, go to the bride and ask her consent to the marriage; the bride replies by keeping silent or by nodding her head. The *khazi* next asks the consent of the bridegroom and then conducts the *nikah*. After the *nikah*, the bridegroom's mother ties the *lacha* around the neck of the bride. Almonds, walnut and dates are thrown over everybody. The feast that follows is arranged by the bride's family. Two days after the *nikah*, the *walima* (reception) ceremony is held, with the bridegroom's family giving a feast to all relatives.

Among the Nawaiyat, divorce is permitted and either spouse can initiate it. If the husband initiates a divorce (*talaq*), he has to pay *mehar*, if it has not already been paid to his wife. The presence of the *khazi* is necessary, along with witnesses,

to finalise the matter. The wife is given maintenance for three months and, if she is pregnant, till her delivery. When a wife seeks a divorce (*qula*), she does not get any maintenance from her husband and has to return the *mehar* if it has been paid to her and is demanded. If the divorce cannot be settled by the *khazi*, it goes to court. The children live with the father, but if they are very young they live with the mother. However, divorce is very rare among the Nawaiyat. Widows, widowers and divorcees can remarry.

The Nawaiyat bury their dead. After the relatives have seen the face of the deceased, the body is bathed, perfume is applied, and covered with a shroud. The shroud is red if it is a married woman or unmarried girl, otherwise the shroud is white. The corpse is carried in the *janasa* (coffin) to the burial ground. The grave is dug in a north-south direction. The body is laid with the head towards the north and covered with a mat. The grave is then filled. A prayer is offered and verses from the Koran are recited. On the third day after death, the *ziyarat* is held. All the relatives and friends are served a vegetarian feast. The *ziyarat* is performed on the seventh and tenth day too. On the fortieth day is the *chehallam*. A feast is arranged. All through the night, verses from the Koran are recited and prayers for the departed soul are conducted. The next morning, the male relatives go to the burial ground and place flowers on the grave. Every year, on the death anniversary, food is distributed to the poor and prayers are conducted.

Traditionally, the Nawaiyat were traders and religious specialists. Most of them are now businessmen, but some are in government service and some are self-employed. As the Nawaiyat are highly educated, there are doctors, engineers, teachers, jurists, and administrators among them.

The *khazi* is the sole authority to decide on matters of marriage, divorce and other religious affairs.

The Nawaiyat are of the Sunni faith. They pray five times a day, fast during the month of *Ramzan*, give charity (*zakath*) to the poor, and go on the Haj pilgrimage if they can afford it. Friday is the most auspicious day of the week for them. They visit the shrines of various holy saints and are also affiliated to *pirs* individually and also at the family level. Their two main

festivals are Id-ul-Fitr or Ramzan and Id-ul-Zuha or Bakrid. During the month of *Zilhaj* or *Bakrid,* they sacrifice goats. During the month of *Muharram,* they grieve because it was during this month that the battle of Karbala was fought in the cause of Islam.

A characteristic feature of the Nawaiyat, is the observance of a ritual called *bibi ki sainak.* Before any oncoming festival or ceremony, some food is prepared in a pot in the name of Bibi Fathemus Zohra, the daughter of the Prophet Mohammed and the wife of Hazarath Ali. The food is distributed to pious and married women after a prayer, but not to widows.

The Nawaiyat have a great regard for learning and education. Almost all of them memorise the Koran. Folk-tales regarding the origin and migration of the community is abound.

Traditionally, the Nawaiyat share ritual, social and occupational linkages with others. During festive occasions and at the time of prayer, all Muslims meet together and there is no difference among them. They mix freely with other communities at the social level. They accept both cooked and uncooked food from their neighbours and friends of other communities. Until two generations ago, they were very particular about matrimonial alliances and were strictly endogamous. But now they have started marrying men and women from other sects of Islam. They share burial place and religious shrines with other Muslims.

The attitude of the Nawaiyat towards education and modern medicine is positive. They favour family planning but prefer to have three or four children. They have access to all modern urban civic amenities. They are aware of savings and investments; they, however, prefer real estate and stocks, as receiving or giving money on interest is considered a sin.

MOHAMMED A. KALAM
RAZIA SULTANA

NIYOGI BRAHMAN

The Niyogi Brahman are a group of Telugu-speaking Brahmans. The term 'Niyogi' is derived from *niyamanam*, which means 'appointment'. It is said that they were appointed as ministers to the kings in the past. Since then they have been referred to as the Niyogi Brahman. The Niyogi Brahman migrated to Tamil Nadu from Andhra Pradesh during the Vijayanagara period, particularly during the reign of the Madurai Nayaks. Their counterparts in Andhra Pradesh have four subgroups, *viz.* Aruvelu, Nandavarikula, Prathamasaka and Golkondavyaparulu. The Niyogi Brahman of Tamil Nadu claim to be Aruvelu Niyogulu (six thousand Niyogi), who are claimed to be higher in social status among the Niyogi as well as in the Brahman cluster. Though the Niyogi Brahman are few in number, they are scattered in all the districts. They chiefly inhabit Thanjavur, Tirunelveli, Tiruchchirappalli, Pudukkotai, Ramanathapuram, South Arcot, North Arcot Ambedkar, Madurai and Madras Districts. They speak Telugu among themselves and Tamil with others. They use the Tamil script.

The Niyogi Brahman are vegetarian. They eat all varieties of vegetables including leafy vegetables. Their staple food is rice. They consume all pulses, particularly red gram. Roots and tubers are consumed occasionally and fruits regularly. Groundnut oil is used for cooking. They drink tea and coffee. Taking alcoholic drinks is not socially accepted. Milk and milk products are consumed. Both men and women are habituated to chewing betel leaves and arecanut with lime. Some men use snuff.

The Niyogi Brahman have a number of exogamous *gotras*, such as Kaundinya, Parasara, Bharadwaja, Atreya and Srivatsa, and Traya Rushi *pravara* to regulate marriage alliances. They are further divided into a number of exogamous *intiperlu* (surnames) such as Tipparaju, Akkiraju, Sarvapalli, Atmakur, Nimmagadda, Peddiraju and Thacher. *Gotra* is the ultimate exogamous unit, as more than one *intiperlu* group has the same *gotra* affiliation. However, having lived in Tamil Nadu for the last five or six centuries, most of them do not use their *intiperlu*

and have started using their father's name as surname. They are aware of the *varna* system and consider themselves Brahmans.

The Niyogi Brahman follow community endogamy and *gotra* and *pravara* exogamy. They prefer consanguineous marriages, such as with mother's brother's daughter, father's sister's daughter and sister's daughter. Nowadays, the number of consanguineous marriages in the community is decreasing. Generally, girls are married around 18 years of age, while boys get married after they are 22. Marriage alliances are fixed by negotiation. Monogamy is the norm. However, polygyny is permitted if the first wife is barren. The *thali* and toe-rings are the marriage symbols for women. They perform the *kanyadanam* ritual in marriage. Dowry is paid in both cash and kind. They follow the patrilocal rule of residence. Dissolution of marriage is not socially approved. Widower remarriage is permitted. Sororate is practised. Nowadays, there are no restrictions on intergroup marriage among Telugu-speaking Brahmans in Tamil Nadu as well as between the Telugu Niyogi Brahman and the Tamil Smartha Brahman.

Nuclear or vertically extended families are common among the Niyogi Brahman. They observe an avoidance relationship between daughter-in-law and father-in-law and son-in-law and mother-in-law. These avoidance relationships are not strictly followed now. A joking relationship exists with wife's unmarried younger sisters, husband's younger brothers and sister's children. All sons get equal shares from parental property. Daughters, by tradition, do not have rights over parental property, but nowadays, in a few families, they are given some portion of the property at the time of their marriage. The eldest son succeeds his father as the head of the family.

Most Niyogi Brahman women have no role in economic activities. Women participate in social functions and religious rituals. They do not inherit any property. Some educated women work in government and private organisations. Women control family expenditure.

The Niyogi Brahman observe the pre-delivery ritual, *seemantham*, during the seventh or ninth month of a woman's first pregnancy. Some of them also observe another ritual,

pumsavana. Seemantham is performed in the pregnant woman's marital home by the woman's natal household. She is presented new clothes and bangles and then she goes to her natal home for parturition. Birth pollution is observed for ten days. Both the mother and the child bathe ceremonially on the 11th day to mark the end of pollution. On the same day, *jatakakarma, ayushhomam* and *namakarnam* are performed for the child. *Annaprasana* (rice-feeding ceremony) is performed on the first birthday of the child. A Brahman priest officiates at the ceremony and performs a *homa* (sacred fire). The tonsuring ceremony is observed for both male and female children at a temple during the 11th month or the third year. Ear-boring is performed only for girls. A girl attaining *pushpavathi* (puberty) observes pollution for three days and takes ceremonial bath on the fourth day when a small function is held. The maternal uncle of the girl presents new clothes to the girl at the function. *Upanayana* (sacred thread-wearing ceremony) for boys used to be conducted when they were 7, 9 or 11. Nowadays, it is performed on the day before their marriage.

Niyogi Brahman marriage rituals are performed according to Vedic procedures. Varalakshmi *vratam* is an important event in their marriage rituals. Marriage rituals are performed at the bride's residence or at a *kalyana mandap*. A feast is given by the bride's parents. *Shanthi muhurtham* (consummation ceremony) is at the bride's residence.

The Niyogi Brahman cremate their dead. *Nitya karma* is observed, as in the case of other Brahmans. On the day following the cremation, the *asthi* (bones) is collected and disposed of in a sacred river. *Dasaham* is observed on the tenth day. The eldest and youngest sons are the primary mourners for father and mother respectively. *Yekodeestam, sapindeekaranam* and *subhasweekaranam* are the rituals conducted on the 11th, 12th and 13th day respectively. They observe ancestor worship by performing the *tarpana* on all Amavasya and Grahana (eclipse) days.

Land is the main natural resource for the Niyogi Brahman. The land is controlled by individual proprietorship. They are mainly a landowning community. They are landlords, who used to do settled cultivation. Nowadays most of them lease their lands to other communities, such as the Vellalar and the

Naicker. A few of them are priests. Some have started business and trade, others work in government and private organisations. Some are in self-employment. Some of them have became cooks in restaurants.

The Niyogi Brahman do not have a traditional caste council. Some of them are members of the Brahman Association in the State. They go to the police or judicial courts to report crimes or settle disputes.

The Niyogi Brahman worship the deities of the wider pantheon and follow the teachings of Sankaracharya. Their *kuladeivam* include Lord Venkatachalapati and Lord Subramanya. They also worship village deities. They celebrate all major Hindu festivals of local importance, such as Vinayaka Chaturthi, Deepavali, Dussehra, Ramnavami and Sivaratri. They participate in the local Mariamman temple fairs and festivals as well as the festivities of regional deities. Generally, they invite Madhwa, Rayar and Smartha Brahmans to officiate at their rituals and ceremonies.

The Niyogi Brahman accept and exchange food and water from other Brahman communities. All Brahmans of the local area have a common cremation ground. They share wells with others. The Niyogi Brahman get the services of the Vannan, Ambattan and artisans, such as the *achari* (goldsmith), *kusavan* (potters) and *melakkaran* (musicians), and pay them for their services, both in cash and kind. A few of them are priests for the higher castes, like the Vellalar and the Chettiar. Some of them who are landlords engage people from the Vellalar and the Naicker communities as tenants. Similar cultivator-labour relationships are maintained with other communities. The community has businessmen, scholars, creative artists, white-collar job-holders, teachers, administrators, engineers, doctors. They also have political leaders at the village panchayat level.

The Niyogi Brahman favour formal education for their children. Most of them study upto college level. There are significant dropouts, mainly due to poverty. They favour modern medicare as well as family planning. They enjoy all civic amenities.

V.S. Deep Kumar

NULAYAR

The Nulayar call themselves Nalayan, Valan, Arayar, Katal Arayan and Katakkotai. Their traditional occupation is fishing and plying boats. The word Valan is derived from *vala*, meaning 'net'. It is also a corrupt form of *valayan,* meaning 'a person who throws a net for fishing'. They are chiefly distributed in the districts of Kanniyakumari, North Arcot Ambedkar, Thanjavur, Tirunelveli and Tiruchchirappalli.

The Nulayar are a migrant population from Kerala. The prevailing oral tradition among them says that Parasurama brought their ancestors from Kerala to buy boats and convey passengers in the rivers and backwaters on the western coast. Another legend is that one of the Perumals had selected them to ply his boats and conferred on them special privileges. They also pride themselves on their caste being one of remote antiquity and that Vedavyasa (the author of the Puranas) and Guha (who plied the boat for Rama, Sita and Lakshmana across the Ganga during their exile in the forest) were of their caste.

The Nulayar speak both Tamil and Malayalam among themselves and Tamil with others. They use the Tamil script. Their attire is akin to that of Tamil-speaking communities. They wear holy ash on their foreheads.

The Nulayar are nonvegetarian, but do not eat beef or pork. Their basic food items are rice and finger millet supplemented with a variety of pulses, vegetables, roots and tubers. They use groundnut, sesamum and coconut oils for cooking. Their consumption of fruit, milk and milk products is occasional. They drink coffee and tea. Some men take alcoholic drinks. They smoke *beedis* and cigarettes, chew tobacco and betel, and use snuff.

The Nulayar are an endogamous group. They are divided into four exogamous groups, known as *illams* or clans: the Kotto *illam*, Karot *illam*, Chempot *illam* and Ponnot *illam*. These regulate marriage alliances. They consider themselves superior to the Mukkuvan. There existed a bitter relationship between the Nulayar and the Mukkuvan. The Mukkuvan, the numerically dominant fisherfolk of Kanniyakumari did not

allow the Nulayar to go to sea except on Sunday, which is the Mukkuvan Sabbath. So, the Nulayar have been forced to adopt coir-making as their primary occupation instead of fishing, which was their traditional occupation.

Marital alliances among the Nulayar are negotiated by their elders. Monogamy is the norm. Polygyny is allowed only in case the first wife is barren. The *thali* and toe-rings are the marriage symbols. They practise consanguinity and prefer to marry an elder sister's daughter, father's sister's daughter and mother's brother's daughter. The age at marriage is 17-20 years for girls and 22-25 for boys. Dowry is paid. They follow the rule of patrilocal residence after marriage. Divorce is permitted. The husband has to pay compensation to his divorced wife. Children are the responsibility of the mother in case of divorce. Widow and divorcee remarriage is permitted. Both sororate and levirate are allowed.

Both nuclear and mixed extended families exist among the Nulayar. Joking relations are permitted between consanguineal and affinal relations. All sons have equal rights to ancestral property. The eldest son succeeds as the head of the family after his father's death.

Nulayar women have a secondary status compared to the men. They participate in all social and religious activities along with their men. They take part in their primary occupation, *i.e.* coir-making, along with their men and supplement their family income.

The Nulayar observe the pre-delivery ritual *valaikappu* during the fifth month of a woman's first pregnancy. Her parents perform it. After this, she is taken to her natal house for her delivery. Deliveries take place at home with the help of an experienced *maruthaval* (midwife). She gets one sari, 5 kg of rice and some vegetables for her services. They observe birth pollution for 41 days. For the first 15 days, special food items, including fish and medicinal vegetables, are given to the mother. On the 28th day, they put a silver chain around the child's waist, perform puja and serve a feast. After three months, they go to a nearby Hindu temple and perform the name-giving ceremony. The child is tonsured before this ceremony. Puberty rites (*pooppu neerattu vizha*) are performed when a girl attains menarche. The girl is secluded in a room. Pollution lasts for

9-16 days. She is given a ceremonial bath on the last day. Then the community barber sprinkles coconut milk on her head. A feast is served to all relatives.

Marriage among the Nulayar is negotiated by the elders, after the horoscopes of the boy and girl are matched. On the betrothal day, the two families exchange five or ten rupees and a few betel leaves. The wedding takes place at the bride's residence. Four lamps are lit in the four corners of the *pandal*. A Brahman officiates at the marriage. The bridegroom's brother-in-law accompanies him to the marriage *pandal*, while the bride is accompanied by her father. Before entering the *pandal*, both the bride and the bride-groom seek the permission of the assembled elders and relatives. Then they go round the *pandal* (*kavanam*) three times. Elderly married women sprinkle holy water on their heads. After chanting Vedic mantras, the Brahman hands over the *thali* to the bridegroom, who turns it first towards the east and then towards the lamp, three times. Then he ties it around the neck of the bride. The couple exchange garlands. The consummation ceremony is at the bride's parents' residence. The newly married couple then go to the bridegroom's house.

The Nulayar either cremate or bury their dead. When an adult male dies, the body is kept in the courtyard and the community barber shaves its head and beard. The body is then bathed, wrapped in a new cloth, adorned with sandal paste and *kumkum* and carried on a bier to the burial ground. The *thali* of the widow, together with a 25 or 50 paise coin, is tied to the dhoti of the deceased. The body is buried with the head towards the south. After cremation, the ashes are disposed of in the sea. Liquid food, made of rice and lentils, is given to all the mourners. Death entails pollution for 16 days. On the third day after death, they take oilbaths. On the 16th day after death, they perform the last rites (*pulavili*). The community barber sprinkles coconut milk on the grave or the cremation spot and is paid for this. The favourite food of the deceased is prepared and offered. A feast is arranged for all the invitees.

The traditional occupation of the Nulayar was fishing. Nowadays, coir-making is their primary occupation and fishing their secondary one. Both men and women take part in coir-making. They depend entirely on the nearby market for their

requirements. They deal in cash.

The Nulayar *kula panchayat* exists at the regional level. The elders of the Nulayar community constitute its members. They meet in a temple to settle disputes and such matters as divorce and theft. In case of rape or adultery, they force the culprit to accept the woman as his wife. If already married, he has to maintain her till she gets married. The *kula panchayat* not only looks after their community interests but is also responsible for planning and implementing welfare and development activities.

The Nulayar are Hindus. Lord Murugan is their village deity and they have a priest of their own community to conduct worship. Every year, in the first week of March, a village boy carries the Murugan idol from their village temple to the temple of Lord Murugan at Tiruchendur in Chidambaranar District where worship of Lord Murugan is performed ceremonially. The mouth of the boy who carries the idol is pierced from one side to the other with an elongated iron needle that is left *in situ* and 1008 small pins are stuck all over his body by a goldsmith. They also worship Kali, Durga, Mariamman and Siva. They celebrate the Onam festival in the month of *Avani* (May). During Onam they wear new clothes and visit their community temple. They observe all other Hindu festivals too.

The Nulayar accept and exchange cooked and uncooked food and water from neighbouring communities, such as the Mukkuvan and the Chavalakaran. They share wells and other water sources, and cremation grounds, with other communities. They maintain patron-client relationships with the local Muslims, from whom they purchase coconut shells. The community has some petty businessmen, mainly teastall owners and small shop- owners.

Only a few Nulayar children go to school. Boys study upto the secondary level. No graduate is reported from the community. They favour indigenous and modern medicare and family planning. They depend on moneylenders for credit to run their coir manufacturing activities. The have access to all civic amenities.

N.C. Sarkar

ODDAR

The Oddar are the Telugu-speaking stone-cutters and earth diggers of Tamil Nadu. They are mainly found in the Salem, Madurai, Anna, Dharmapuri, Tiruchchirappalli and Coimbatore Districts, they are migrants from what is now Andhra Pradesh. Boyar and Odda Nayakkar are synonyms of the Oddar. They use the titles Nayakkan or Boyan.

Originally, the Oddar were wanderers and nomads. It appears they came south at the time of the Nayaks of Madurai, who set them to digging the *teppakkulam* (tank) and to assist in raising the *gopuram* (tower) while constructing the great Meenakshi temple (Thurston, 1909). Regarding their origin, Thurston (1909) writes that "when Siva and Parvathi were walking one sultry day upon the earth, they got very hot and thirsty. The drops of perspiration which fell from Siva were changed by him into a man with a pick and crowbar, while those falling from Parvati turned into a woman carrying a basket. The man and woman quickly sunk a well, with the cooling waters of which the God and Goddess refreshed themselves and in gratitude promised the labourers certain gifts, but neither was satisfied and both grumbled which so incensed Siva that he cursed them and vowed that they and their descendants should live by the sweat of their brows".

Oddar men wear the dhoti and shirt and the women dress in sari and blouse. Black beads and the *soruhu* (ear ornament) are their favoured ornaments. Their mother tongue is Telugu. They speak Tamil with others. They use the Tamil script.

The Oddar are nonvegetarian. They eat pork but not beef. Rice and finger millet are their staple foods, which they supplement with pulses, vegetables and tubers. Most of them take alcoholic drinks. They drink coffee and tea. Consumption of milk and fruit is rare. They use groundnut oil and gingelly oil for cooking. Most men smoke either *beedis* or cigarettes. Many of them chew betel leaves, with or without tobacco. Some of them also use snuff.

The Oddar are divided into three occupational subgroups, *viz.*, Kal Oddar (stone-cutter), Man Oddar (earth-digger) and

Sunnambu Oddar (lime-maker). The first two are considered equally ranked, while the latter is ranked lower. Nowadays such social rankings do not exist. These occupational groups were once endogamous, but nowadays marriage alliances are arranged among them. However, each subgroup has 18 exogamous clans which cluster into two separate groups, each with nine clans. They are:

Group A	*Group B*
1. Janittimmidu	1. Mungararu
2. Abba Mukkara	2. Rahadaru
3. Muddha Kalluru	3. Pallapparu
4. Besingaru	4. Sandhalaru
5. Vallapparu	5. Mancalaru
6. Jadipillaru	6. Mallaru
7. Olahalladu	7. Alanguddaru
8. Gavveru	8. Sandahallaru
9. Nallakamaru	9. (they could not remember)

The Oddar are aware of the Hindu *varna* system and consider themselves Sudras.

Marriages are arranged through negotiation. Generally, boys are married between the ages of 21 and 25 and girls between 16 and 20. They make consanguineous alliances. The most common type are with daughters of mother's brothers, father's sisters and sister's. Monogamy is the norm. but polygyny is allowed. Divorce is allowed as decided by the caste panchayat. Either spouse can initiate divorce. Widow remarriage is permitted. A widow can marry one of her deceased husband's brothers. It is reported that a woman who had seven husbands was much respected and her blessing on a bridal pair was considered auspicious (Thurston, 1909). The *thali* is the symbol of marriage.

Most Oddar families are nuclear. There is no avoidance relationship. The Oddar have joking relationships between brothers-in-law and sisters-in-law. The sons inherit parental property. The father or husband is the head of the family. If he dies, the mother acts as the head of the family. If the children are grown up succession is by the eldest son.

Women have a secondary status among the Oddar. They

work as daily-wage labourers to supplement the family income. Some of them are employed in various organisations. They control household expenditure. They participate in all social and religious activities. Nowadays the Oddar are educating their daughters.

The first delivery of an Oddar woman takes place in her natal home. Her parents perform the *valaikappu* ritual in the seventh or ninth month of her pregnancy. They arrange a feast for the relatives. Birth pollution is observed for a month. On the last day, they tie a yellow thread around the waist of the child and all the relatives give it gifts. On the same day, they name the child. They perform the ear-boring and tonsuring ceremonies on any day after three months, but usually during the first, third or fifth year.

When an Oddar girl attains puberty, she is given a bath on the third day at an auspicious time. She is kept isolated for 11 days in a hut, built by her maternal uncle. On the 11th day, the hut is burnt and the girl is given a ceremonial bath. Puberty pollution ends with a ceremony arranged after three months, in front of the *kovil veedu* (temple house). The maternal uncle gives her a sari (*marappu seer*). After the ceremony, a feast is given to all the relatives.

A marriage alliance, among the Oddar, gets under way when it is blessed by their family deity — this is assumed when a flower from the idol falls at the auspicious time. The family inform their temple priests and their headman, *boyan*. They assemble in front of their family temple and decide the bride-price and an auspicious date for the marriage. The maternal uncle of the bride receives some money as *maman seer* from the bridegroom and he, in turn, gives clothes to the couple. Dowry is paid in cash and ornaments nowadays. The marriage is confirmed by a betrothal ceremony at which both parties exchange plates containing the betrothal sari, betel-leaves and turmeric. The wedding takes place at the bride's village in a *pandal* before the temple. It is reported that the Sunnambu Oddar play the *urumi* drum during weddings. The headman and the priest officiate at the marriage and hand over the *thali* to the bridegroom who ties it around the neck of the bride. The couple then go to the bridegroom's home where the consummation takes place on the same day.

The Oddar bury their dead. The body is bathed with water from a nearby well or tank, clad in new clothes and garlanded. It is then taken in a procession to the burial ground with a barber blowing the conch. The Parayan makes the bier. The eldest son performs the *kolli* ceremony at the burial ground by breaking the earthen pot containing water. His head is shaved after the burial. The body is buried with its head to the south. On the next day, they go to the burial ground and offer milk at the grave. On the following Wednesday, the eldest son, who performed the *kolli,* sits behind a screen throughout the night. The next morning, he is expected to see, first, a cow and then proceed to the burial ground to offer rice to the crows. On this day, the relatives give new clothes to the sons. On the day of the burial the wife of the deceased removes her *thali* and is given new clothes by her parents and in-laws.

The Oddar are a landless people. Most of them work as labourers at building sites or at stone-cutting and well-digging. A few of them are building contractors. The educated seek other employment.

The Oddar have their own caste panchayat which controls their society and decides disputes, including divorce. Its headman is called *boyan*. He officiates at weddings and other family functions. His office is hereditary. They have a caste association which is involved in the welfare programmes of the community. The association is known as Boyar Samuha Sangam.

The Oddar are Hindus and their caste deity is Bhadrakali. They worship family deities such as Veeramatti, Tattaiya, Krishnaswamy, Mariamman and also Murugan, Rama and Venkatachalapathy. They celebrate Deepavali, Pongal and Thai Amavasai. In the month of *Masi* (February-March), Mariamman is worshipped. Some of them render service to the temples of Lord Eswara and Pattattalasiamman in Kodaimangalam village near Palani during puja days. They clean the temple premises. They are paid for this by the temple trust. They worship their ancestors.

The Oddar utilise the services of the barber and washerman but do not accept food and water from them. They share wells with other communities of equal status. They have their own cremation grounds. Their caste members have been elected to village panchayats and panchayat unions.

The Oddar favour formal education for their children. They visit hospitals and primary health centres for medical treatment. They have access to all civic amenities and developmental programmes.

S. MANOHARAN

Kal Oddar

The Kal Oddar are also called Kallu Oddar. The terms *kal* and *kallu* (stone) refers to their traditional occupation, stone-cutting. They are a subgroup of the Oddar caste cluster. They used Boyar and Chetty as their titles in the past. Thurston (1909) writes that "they are Telugu people who came originally from Orissa, hence their name". They are distributed in all the Tamil Nadu districts, with major concentration in the Salem, Coimbatore, Periyar, South Arcot, North Arcot Ambedkar, Madras, Madurai, Tiruchchirappalli and Thanjavur Districts. They speak Telugu among themselves and Tamil with outsiders. They use the Tamil script.

The Kal Oddar are nonvegetarian, but do not eat beef. They however, eat pork. Their staple food is rice, supplemented by *ragi, cholam* and *kambu* (millets). They eat locally available pulses and vegetables, including roots and tubers. Groundnut oil is used for cooking. Men take alcoholic drinks. Smoking *beedis*, cigarettes and cheroots, chewing betel and tobacco and using snuff are common in the community.

The Kal Oddar are an endogamous community. It is divided into 91 exogamous clans (*kulam*). Some of the clans are Muddadongala, Samathala Alukutti, Ulligadda, Rajavaru and Miniku Rajavaru. The functions of the clans are to indicate descent or ancestry and regulate marriage alliances. They claim superior status over such communities as the Pallan, the Parayan and the Chakkiliyan in the social hierarchy. They are aware of the *varna* system and consider themselves Sudras.

The Kal Oddar follow endogamy at the community level and exogamy at the clan level. The Oddar subgroups intermarry nowadays. A Kal Oddar man may marry his mother's brother's daughter, father's sister's daughter or elder sister's daughter.

Monogamy is the norm. Polygyny was the usual practice in the past. Marriage symbols are the *thali* and *metti*. *Oli* (token bride-price) is given in cash. Some now pay dowry too. They follow the patrilocal rule of residence after marriage. Divorce is permitted on grounds of adultery and maladjustment. Either spouse can initiate divorce. Compensation is given to the aggrieved party in divorce cases. Both male and female divorcees can remarry. Widow remarriage and widower remarriage are permitted.

Most Kal Oddar families are nuclear. A joking relationship is permitted among certain categories of relatives, such as brothers-in-law and between grandparents and grandchildren. Property is inherited by all sons equally. The eldest son succeeds the father as head of the family.

The status of women is low in the Kal Oddar community. Women participate in economic activities. They help their men in stone-cutting. They weave objects with wild date palm leaves and sell them in the market. Some of them are employed in government service.

The Kal Oddar do not observe any rituals for pregnant women. The first confinement takes place in the natal home of the woman. They observe post-delivery pollution for a month. Both the mother and the child are given ceremonial baths at the end of the month. The tonsuring ceremony and ear-boring are performed for all children at the end of the first year or during the third year.

Puberty rites *(rudhumangala snanam)* are observed for girls on attaining menarche. The maternal uncle of the girl gives her a sari and cosmetics on this occasion.

Kal Oddar marriages are arranged by the elders through negotiation. Prior to the wedding, *nichayathartham* is conducted in the bride's home. Their elders officiate at the wedding. Nowadays, they engage Brahman priests to officiate at weddings in urban areas. *Kanyadanam* (giving away the bride) and tying of the *thali* around the neck of bride by the bridegroom are the main wedding rituals. The consummation ceremony takes place at the bridegroom's residence.

The Kal Oddar bury their dead. Death pollution lasts for seven to nine days. They observe *karma* (final death rites) on

the seventh or ninth day. They worship their ancestors once a year.

The Kal Oddar depend mainly on their traditional occupations, stone-cutting, mining and quarrying. A few of them own cultivable land. They also work as agricultural labourers, daily wage casual labourers and industrial labourers. There are expert masons among them. They take up construction of buildings and roads on a contract basis. Some are employed in government and private services. Some do business in marketing the materials required for building construction and the tools required for masonry.

The traditional caste council of the Kal Oddar exercises social control over them in rural areas. Elders of the community form the members of the council. They have their caste associations to look after the general welfare of the community.

The Kal Oddar are Hindus. They worship Perumal, Mayavan, Periyaswamy, Madurai Veeran and Veerabhadraswamy as family deities. Their sacred specialists are their community elders. They celebrate Hindu festivals such as Deepavali and Pongal. Their sacred centres are Madurai, Palani, Rameswaram, Tirupati, Tiruchendur and Srirangam. There are Christian converts among them.

There are good painters among the Kal Oddar. Women do expert mat-weaving with palm leaves. They have an oral tradition, consisting of folk-songs and folk-dances.

The Kal Oddar accept water and cooked food from communities such as the Balija, the Komati, the Pillai, the Parayan and the Chakkiliyan. Nowadays, intersubgroup marriages are taking place. They share wells and water sources with other communities. They participate in traditional festivals and festivities. They take the services of the Vannan (washerman) and Ambattan (barber) communities. They maintain patron-client and cultivator-labour relationships.

The Kal Oddar send their children to school, but many drop out due to poverty. They favour both traditional and modern medicare. They favour family planning. They have access to all civic amenities.

D. Xaviour

Man Oddar

The Man (Mannu) Oddar are a subgroup of the Oddar caste cluster. Traditionally, they are earth-workers. The word *man* means 'earth'. They use Boyar as a title.

The Man Oddar are nonvegetarian. Their diet is the same as that of other Oddar groups.

The Man Oddar are an endogamous community. They are divided into several exogamous clans. Some of them are Vemulavandlu, Manjilavandlu, Valapulu and Dandalu. The clans indicate descent or ancestry and regulate marriage alliances. They claim superior status over communities such as the Pallan, the Parayan and the Chakkiliyan in the social hierarchy.

The Man Oddar follow endogamy at the community level and exogamy at the clan level. Intersubgroup marriages are now taking place in some urban areas. They marry a mother's brother's daughter, father's sister's daughter or elder sister's daughter. The age at marriage is 18 for girls and 20 for boys. Marriage alliances are fixed by the elders through negotiations. Monogamy is the norm. Polygyny was practised in the past. The marriage symbols are the *thali* and toe-rings. Their *thali* consists of *nallapoosalu* (black beads) and is called *nallapoosala thali*. Bride-price is given in cash. Dowry is given in cash and kind. The weddings are conducted in the same manner as other Oddar groups. They follow the patrilocal rule of residence after marriage. Divorce is permitted with social approval on grounds of adultery and maladjustment. Compensation is given to the aggrieved party in divorce cases. Either spouse can initiate divorce. Both male and female divorcees are allowed to remarry. So are widows and widowers.

Most Man Oddar families are nuclear. A joking relationship is permitted among brothers-in-law and between grandparents and grandchildren. All sons have equal shares in ancestral property. The eldest son in the family succeeds as head of the family.

The status of women is low in the Man Oddar community. They participate in economic activities. They do earthwork along with their men and work as labourers. They have a role in social functions, rituals and religious spheres.

The Man Oddar do not observe any specific rituals for pregnant women. The pregnant woman is taken to her natal home during the seventh or ninth month of pregnancy for her first confinement. They observe birth pollution for one month. Tonsuring and ear-boring are observed for all children at the end of the first year or during the third year. Puberty rites (*rudhumangala snanam*) are observed when girls attain menarche.

The Man Oddar bury their dead. Death pollution lasts for seven to nine days. On the seventh or ninth day they observe *karma*, final death rites. Ancestor worship is observed once a year.

The traditional occupation of the Man Oddar is earthwork and most of them pursue it even today. They dig tanks and build roads and houses. Most of them are landless. A few hold small bits of cultivable lands. They work as agricultural labourers and daily wage casual labourers. There are contractors among them who take up road construction and tank bund construction. There are some businessmen trading in the materials required for construction. Some of them in urban areas are employed in government service.

The traditional caste council exists in rural areas for the social control of the Man Oddar community. Elders of the community form the members of the council. They have their caste association to look after the general welfare of the community.

The Man Oddar are Hindus. They worship Periyaswamy, Kamakshi, Bommaswamy, Nallendraswamy and Veeramma as family deities. Their sacred specialists are their community elders. Nowadays, in urban areas, they engage Brahman priests to officiate at weddings. They celebrate Deepavali and Pongal. Their sacred centres are Palani, Madurai, Tirupati, Rameswaram and Tiruchendur. Some of them have converted to Christianity.

The Man Oddar have an oral tradition consisting of folk-songs. They perform folk-dances.

The Man Oddar accept water and cooked food from such communities as the Balija, the Komati, the Pillai, the Mudaliar and the Vanniyar. They do not accept water and cooked food

from communities such as the Pallan, the Parayan and the Chakkiliyan. Inter-subgroup marriages are now taking place. They share wells and water sources with other communities. They participate in traditional festivals and festivities. They take the service of the Vannan and the Ambattan communities. They maintain patron-client and cultivator-labour relationships. There are a few businessmen, teachers and white-collar jobholders in the community.

The Man Oddar send their children to school but most of them drop out due to poverty. They use both indigenous and modern medicare. They favour family planning. They have access to all civic amenities.

D. XAVIOUR

Oddar Christian

The Oddar Christian were converted some three or four generations ago from the Hindu Oddar community. They are mainly Roman Catholics. They live in a separate street in villages along with the Hindu Oddar.

The Oddar Christian are nonvegetarian, but do not eat beef. The rest of their diet is similar to that of their Hindu counterparts.

The Oddar Christian do not claim to belong to any of the three subgroups of the Hindu Oddar. The Oddar Christian and the Hindu Oddar claim equal status among themselves.

There is no avoidance relationship among the Oddar Christian. Joking with brothers-in-law and sisters-in-law is common. The family pattern is either nuclear or joint. Generally sons live with their parents for a few years after marriage before they establish a separate house. Parental properties are shared equally among the sons, but only after the marriage of all sons and daughters. The parents live with their sons in their old age.

The women are consulted in family matters. They earn and contribute to the family income. Oddar Christian girls are being educated nowadays.

The first delivery of an Oddar Christian girl is in her natal home. During the seventh or ninth month of her pregnancy, her parents visit her, bringing different rice preparations and distribute these to the close relatives. They then take her to their home. The child is given *sevvennai* (jaggery mixed in castor oil) as its first food. Pollution is observed for nine days and on the tenth day the house is cleaned. The child is baptised in the church within thirty days. The child is also named on this day. Communion is given to the child between the ages of 12 and 15. Before taking Communion, the boys and girls attend Bible classes in the local church for about a month. On the day of receiving Communion, the maternal uncle gives new clothes to the boy or girl. Tonsuring is not compulsory among the Oddar Christian, but if anybody wishes to, they arrange it in the local church or in the church at Velankanni. The ear-boring of the child is done on the same day. Puberty rites for the Oddar Christian girls are similar to those for their Hindu counterparts.

Marriages among the Oddar Christian are arranged by the parents through negotiation. The *thali* is the marriage symbol, but the *thali* is a gold disc with the symbol of a cross engraved on it. A golden bead is strung on either side of the disc. They pay dowry. Divorce is not allowed. But widows and widowers can remarry. An Oddar Christian man can marry his mother's brother's daughter or father's sister's daughter but not his sister's daughters. The Oddar Christian consult astrologers to match horoscopes. The betrothal ceremony is the same as among Hindu Oddar. After the betrothal banns are announced (*olai vasilthal* or *arikkai vasilthal*) in the local church, the wedding takes place in the church in the bridegroom's village. The priest of the church officiates at the marriage. The marriage is conducted according to Christian rites. The *thali*-tying ceremony is observed in the church with a special prayer. The couple visit the bride's house on the same day (*muccu*). They stay in the bride's house for three days and then return to the bridegroom's house. They repeat this three times, and only after three *muccu* the consummation ceremony is arranged in the bridegroom's house.

In case of a death among the Oddar Christian, the body

is kept in a prone position and a lamp is kept near its head. The local villagers are informed by the tolling of the church bell. The church priest conducts the prayers in the house, in the church and at the burial ground. They carry the body to the burial ground on a bier made of sticks and poles. A few carry the corpse in a coffin. The eldest son performs the *kolli* ceremony for his mother and the youngest son performs it for his father. Their *kolli* ceremony consists of putting a handful of sand on the dead body after it has been placed in the grave. They carry a cross in the funeral procession and set it up on the grave. The chief mourner does not shave his moustache and beard. If the deceased does not have sons, the eldest daughter or the youngest daughter performs the *kolli*. On the third day, they visit the burial ground to offer milk to the dead (*kuli mulukudal kariyam*). Final rites are observed on the 16th day (*kariyam*), when the dead person is worshipped by placing his belongings and the eatables he likes on his grave. On the day of *kariyam,* the widow removes her *thali.*

The economic organisation of the Oddar Christian is the same as that of their Hindu counterparts. The Oddar Christian have their own panchayat headed by a *maniyakkaran*. In villages where both Hindu Oddars and Oddar Christians live, though they intermingle and claim equal status, the Oddar Christian do not become members of the caste panchayat of the Hindu Oddar. If the Christian population is large, they establish their own caste panchayat. If they are few in number, they do not have any caste panchayat. They consult the church authorities and may take advice from them.

Few marriages take place between Hindu and Christian Oddar. If they do, the non-Christian spouse is converted to Christianity. Christmas, New Year's Day, Easter and Palm Sunday are their major religious festivals. They celebrate the Fatima Matha festival in their village church in the Tamil month of *Adi*. They celebrate the Pongal festival in a different way on the thirtieth day after Christmas, and call it *Munu Raja Pongal*.

The relations of the Oddar Christian with the other castes of the area and their Hindu counterparts are cordial. They eat in the homes of other equally-ranked castes. The Brahman and the Vellalar do not eat in their houses. They share burial grounds with other Christians.

Nowadays, the Oddar Christian are educating their sons and daughters to at least school level. They enjoy the same civic amenities and developmental programmes as the Hindu Oddar.

S. MANOHARAN

Sooramari Oddar

The Sooramari Oddar are a subgroup of the Oddar caste cluster. The etymology of the word *sooramari* is not known, but it refers to their traditional occupation, well-sinking.

The Sooramari Oddar are nonvegetarian, whose diet is similar to that of other Oddar groups.

The Sooramari Oddar are an endogamous group. They are divided into 18 exogamous septs called *kulam* (clan). Some of them are Muddala, Santhala, Manjila, Jedipila and Malledugu. The clans indicate descent or ancestry and regulate marriage alliances.

The Sooramari Oddar follow endogamy at the community level and exogamy at the clan level. Intersubgroup marriages are taking place now in some urban areas. Marriage to a mother's brother's daughter, father's sister's daughter or elder sister's daughter is preferred. Marital alliances are fixed by the elders through negotiations. Monogamy is the norm now. The marriage symbols are *thali* and toe-rings. Bride-price and dowry are paid. They follow the patrilocal rule of residence after marriage. Divorce is permitted on grounds of adultery and maladjustment. Either spouse can initiate divorce. Divorcees, widows and widowers can remarry.

Most Sooramari Oddar families are nuclear. A joking relationship is permitted among brothers-in-law and between grandparents and grandchildren. Property is inherited by all sons equally. The eldest son in the family succeeds as the head of the family.

The status of women in the Sooramari Oddar community is low. Women participate in economic activities. They have a role in agricultural operations and animal husbandry. They work as labourers. They earn and contribute to the family

income. A few of them are employed in government service in urban areas.

The life-cycle rituals of the Sooramari Oddar are similar to those of the other Oddar groups.

Most Sooramari Oddar are landless. A few of them have small bits of land and are cultivators. Their traditional occupation is well-digging. Their present occupations are well-digging, masonry, business, labour and contractorship. Many of them are labourers. They work as daily wage casual labourers, agricultural labourers and industrial labourers. A few of them are employed in government and private service. There are a few teachers, nurses, doctors, engineers and lawyers among them. They take up contracts for construction work. They do business and market the materials required for construction. Wages are paid in cash. Child labour exists.

The Sooramari Oddar accept water and cooked food from such communities as the Balija, the Vanniyar, the Mudaliar, the Pillai and the Komati. They do not accept water and cooked food from communities such as the Pallan, the Parayan and the Chakkiliyan. They prohibit marital relations with other communities. They share wells and water sources with other communities. They participate in traditional festivals and festivities. They use the services of the Vannan and the Ambattan communities. They maintain patron-client and cultivator-labour relationships.

The Sooramari Oddar enjoy the same civic amenities and governmental developmental programmes as other Oddar groups. Their attitude towards education and family planning are also the same.

D. XAVIOUR

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OOCHAN

The Oochan are a class of temple priests. They usually officiate as *pujaris* (priests) at Pidari and other Amman (Shakti) or *grama devata* (village deities) temples. They prefer to call themselves Oochan or Urodear while other communities refer to them as Pujari. They are mainly distributed in the Tirunelveli and Ramanathapuram Districts where they use the titles Kambar.

The name Oochan is derived from the Tamil *oochai*, meaning sound, and refers to their usual mode of invoking the *grama devatas* by beating the drum and singing their praises (Thurston, 1909). They claim their origin from Kambar, an epic poet.

Tamil is the mother tongue of the Oochan. They use the Tamil script. Those living in the border districts of Kerala are conversant with Malayalam. Some of them know a little Hindi and English because they act as guides for pilgrims in Rameswaram.

The Oochan are nonvegetarian, but do not eat pork or beef. Their staples are rice, millets and *ragi*. They eat all varieties of pulses, vegetables, tubers and fruit. They use groundnut oil for cooking. They consume milk and milk products. They drink coffee and tea. Alcoholic drinks such as *sarayam* (arrack) and *kallu* (toddy) are consumed by a few occasionally.

According to Thurston (1909) there are five sections, *viz.* Marayan, Pandi, Kandappan, Periya or Pallavarayan and Pulavan among the Oochan in the northern districts. At present, the Oochan population is divided into two exogamous non-totemistic *gotrams*. They are Parasiva and Siva.

Since a family or a household presupposes a house, the Oochan use the term *veedu* to designate a family. The Oochan have a preponderance of nuclear families. They are characterised by patrilocal residence and patrilineal descent. Inheritance of property after the father's death is by male equigeniture. Daughters have no right to any share in the property unless they have no brothers. The rule of residence after marriage is patrilocal. Divorce and widow remarriages are not permitted.

Oochan women have a secondary status compared to their

men. They mostly do domestic work. They take part in social and ritual functions. Some women work as daily wage labourers. Some of them are employed in the temples as sweepers and garland-makers.

The Oochan perform the *valaikappu* ceremony in the sixth or seventh month of a woman's first pregnancy, during which she is given a new sari and blouse. *Nalungu* is performed, and the woman is given six types of food. The delivery of the first child takes place in the woman's natal home. They observe birth pollution for 13 days. On the 13th day, a purificatory ceremony known as *theetukazhithal* is performed. Both the mother and the child are given ceremonial baths. A vegetarian feast is given to all the relatives. The child is named on the same day. Children are named after ancestors or deities. They perform the tonsuring and ear-boring ceremonies when the child is one, two or three years old, in the Bhadrakali Amman temple. They sacrifice animals on this occasion and meat is cooked and served to relatives and friends.

When an Oochan girl attains puberty, pollution is entailed for 13 days. They do not allow her to enter the kitchen or the main part of the house. On the 13th day, the *poochoodal* or *nalungu* ceremony is performed and is followed by a vegetarian feast.

Marriage among the Oochan is preceded by a betrothal ceremony, *pariyam podarathu*. In this ceremony, *thamboolam* (betel leaves and arecanuts) is exchanged by the bridegroom's and bride's families in the presence of relatives and elders to finalise the alliance. The time, date and venue of the marriage are fixed on this day. In the past, the marriage celebrations lasted for three days, but now the entire ceremony lasts a day. The bridegroom wears the sacred thread on the day before the marriage. On the wedding day, the bride and the bridegroom have ceremonial baths, after which they are dressed in their wedding finery. A Brahman priest officiates at the function. The main wedding rituals are *tharaivarthal*, (symbolic giving away of bride) and the tying of the *thali*. A vegetarian feast is given to all the relatives and friends.

When an Oochan dies, the body (*ponam*) is disposed of either on the same day or on the next day, by cremation or

burial. In general, the bodies of firstborn children are cremated and those of others buried. The body is bathed in water and placed on the bier. At the burial ground, offerings are made to the legendary king, Harischandra, before the final rites.

The milk-pouring ceremony (*pal sadangu*) takes place on the second day. Death entails pollution for 16 or 17 days. Only vegetarian food is eaten by the mourners during the period of pollution. On the 16th morning, the *kalnadappu* takes place. A stone is planted in memory of the deceased before the house and, after it is worshipped, it is thrown into a tank. The *thalaikattal* ceremony is performed by the parents-in-law of the chief mourner, acknowledging him to be the next head of the family. On the 17th day, *thalai muzhugal* takes place. The family members terminate pollution by taking oilbaths. A non-vegetarian feast is served. Annual ceremonies are performed in honour of the dead.

The traditional occupation of the Oochan is officiating as priests in the temples of Pidari and Amman (Shakti). But some of them are now in other occupations. They do not have caste panchayat and their disputes are settled by gatherings of heads of households. Some of them now approach the courts for justice.

The Oochan are Saivites. They also worship other deities of the little and great traditions. They worship, with animal sacrifice, deities such as Bhadrakali, Mariamman and Angalamman. They also worship Murugan, Vigneswara and Nataraja. Their major sacred centres are Rameswaram, Madurai, Kanniyakumari and Chidambaram. They celebrate Pongal, Tamil New Year's Day, Deepavali, Karthigai Deepam, Ganga Pandigai, Navaratri and Sivaratri. The Oochan freely mingle with other communities in common annual temple worship.

T.S. NAIDU

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PADMASALIYAR

The Padmasaliyar were once referred to as 'Sale' and it is derived from the Sanskrit word *salike*, a weaver, and its Tamil equivalent is *saliyar*. The Padmasaliyar consider themselves separate from other weaving communities such as the Saliyar, the Pattu Saliyar, the Devanga, the Pattariyar and the Adhaviyar. The Padmasaliar suffix Chetty or Chettiar to their names. They are distributed in the districts of Chengalpattu, Tiruchchirappalli, Thanjavur, Madurai, Periyar, Salem, Ramanathapuram and Pasumpon Muthuramalinga Thevar.

The following legend is narrated about the origin of the Padmasaliyar. "Once the celelstials (*deivangal*) being desirous of covering their nakedness asked Markandeya Rishi to supply them some clothes. Markandeya approached Vishnudeva and prayed to him. The god directed him to perform a great sacrificial offering to Indira, king of the Gods. Markandeya accordingly performed a sacrifice, and from the holy fire Bhavana Rishi emerged, holding a Padma (lotus flower), and he weaved clothes from the fibres of the lotus. Bhavana Rishi married Bhadravati, the daughter of the sun, and had a hundred and one sons, all of whom took to weaving cloth out of the fibre of the lotus flower and became the progenitors of the Padmasaliyar caste." (Parthasarathy, 1980).

Another legend about the origin of the Padmasaliyar is narrated by Thurston, (1909) as follows: "In former days, the other sects of weavers used to present annually a piece of cloth to a rishi or a saint, named Markandeyulu. One year they omitted to make their offering at the customary period, which enraged the rishi, who performed a yaga and, by the power of mantras or prayers, he caused a man to spring out of the fire of the sacrifice and called him Padma Saliwarlu, and directed him to weave a piece of cloth for his use."

The Padmasaliyar migrated to their present habitats from the Nellore region of Andhra Pradesh during Chola rule. Regarding their migration, Stuart, (1891) states: "..... They claim to be the descendants of the sage named 'Mrikanda',

the weaver of the gods. Their original home appears to have been the Andhra country, from where a section of the Saliyars was invited by the Chola King, Raja Raja Chola I, after the Union of the Eastern Chalukya and Chola dynasties."

The mother-tongue of the Padmasaliyar is Telugu, but they speak Tamil with others. They use the Tamil script to read, write and learn. Some of them are conversant in Hindi, Malayalam and Kannada.

The Padmasaliyar are non-vegetarian, but do not eat beef and pork. Their staple food is rice supplemented with *ragi* and other millets. They consume all varieties of pulses and vegetables that are available in the market. They use groundnut and gingelly oils for cooking. They drink coffee, tea and soft drinks. Most of their men habitually take alcoholic drinks. The men smoke *beedis* and cigarettes. Both men and women like to chew betel leaves with arecanut. Some men use snuff.

The Padmasaliyar consider themselves an endogamous group. They do not have any subgroups among themselves. Earlier writers, however, have mentioned that the Padmasaliyar groups were social parts of the Devanga and Pattusaliyar. Thurston (1909) states that "the Padma Sales belong to the right hand, and the Devangas to the left hand faction, and the latter aver that the Padma Sales took away the body of the goddess Chudeswari, leaving the head". The Census of India, 1961 (Nambiar, 1964) mentions that "Bhavana Rishi married Bhadravati, the daughter of the sun, who bore him a hundred and one sons of whom a hundred became the forefathers of the Padmasaliyar while the remaining man was the ancestor of the Pattusaliyar. Both the sub-divisions — Padmasaliyar and Pattusaliyar — speak Telugu. There is no bar to intermarriage and interdining between them". At present, the Padmasaliyar do not have any relationship with the Devanga and the Pattusaliyar and they consider them, a separate social group.

The Padmasaliyar have several family names (*intiperlu*) which they prefix to their names. These surnames are patrilineal and exogamous. Each surname (*intiperlu*) includes several families. The surnames are named after birth places, loom implements, animals, flowers and colours and sometimes even parts of the human body. Through surnames the Padmasaliyar maintain

the borther-in-law relationship (*bavamaradula varusa*) and brother relationship (*annadammula varusa*). In Kanchipuram and Salem Districts, the Padmasaliyar consider a few surnames as superior or inferior. For instance, in the Kanchipuram region, the Bandari Vagaira group feel they are superior to the Bojja Vagaira, who in turn feel superior to the group of Jana Chetty Vagaira.

The Padmasaliyar usually live in nuclear families. A joking relationship is permitted with certain categories of relations, especially between grandparents and grandchildren and brothers-in-law and sisters-in-law. They observe an avoidance relationship between mother-in-law and son-in-law and daughter-in-law and father-in-law.

The Padmasaliyar follow the Hindu law of inheritance. All male children have right to ancestral property. But nowadays changes are seen in inheritance rules and a few parents follow equigeniture, *i.e.* all children, male and female get an equal share in ancestral property. The eldest son succeeds as the head of the family, after his father's death.

Padmasaliyar women participate in all the social and religious activities along with their menfolk. A majority of the women help the menfolk in weaving. Some of the educated are employed in government as well as in private organisations and many women are experts in thread art and in the preparatory processes of weaving of warp (*jari*) and weft (*sappari*). They contribute to family income and control family expenditure.

The Padmasaliyar observe pre-delivery rituals and the pregnant woman, is taken to her mother's house for the first delivery during the seventh month. Most deliveries are in their homes, with the help of an experienced midwife, but in cities and towns they visit the maternity homes and hospitals for the delivery. They observe birth pollution for 9 to 15 days. They perform the *namakarana vizha* (naming ceremony) on the 15th, 11th or 9th day. The first letter of the name is decided on the basis of the birth star. Sometimes they name the child after their ancestors, but generally they give the name of a god or goddess or a deity. The tonsuring ceremony is conducted at a pilgrim centre like Tirupati, Periyandavankovil,

Kanchipuram or Srirangam. This is generally done in the first, third or fifth year. The ear-piercing ceremony is done for female children after the child is three. The thread-wearing ceremony is arranged during the marriage.

Puberty rites (*peddamanishi* or *rajaswala*) are performed among the Padmasaliyar when a girl attains menarche. She is kept in seclusion for seven days under the shade of coconut leaves brought by her mother's brother (*menamama*). They perform the purificatory ceremony (*punyadanam*) on the 11th day, with the girl's mother's brother offering her *varusa thatta*, a plate with a new sari, coins and fruits on it. That evening, the married women perform the *nalugu*. Then she is accepted into the kitchen.

The Padmasaliyar prefer cross-cousin and uncle-niece marriages. Junior sororate and sororal polygyny are allowed in case of infertility of the first wife. Monogamy is the norm. Child marriage was practised in the past. Nowadays girls are married after attaining puberty. The age at marriage varies from 15-18 years for girls while for boys the marriage age is 20-25 years. Their mode of acquiring mates is by negotiation. The *thali* and toe-rings are the marital symbols. Giving bride-price (*oli*) is prevalent in the Salem, Chengalpattu and Tiruchchirappalli Districts, but it has been replaced by dowry (*katnam*) in the northern parts of Tamil Nadu. Divorce is permitted with the approval of the elders, on the grounds of barrenness, maladjustment and impotency. Both husband and wife have the right to initiate divorce proceedings with the help of their parents. Divorced woman can remarry with simple rituals (*naduveedu kalyanam*). Children are brought up by the father in divorce cases. They did not allow widow remarriage in the past, but it is being permitted now.

In the past, the Padmasaliyar celebrated a marriage over five days. This has now been reduced to two days. The marriage ceremony is held at the bridegroom's residence. On the first day (*pilavatam*), the bridegroom's party receives the bride's party. The next day is the wedding day. The sacred thread is worn before the marriage day. In the Salem, Madurai and Tiruchchirappalli Districts, they continue to wear the sacred thread after marriage, but in Kanchipuram and Madras they

remove the sacred thread the day after the wedding. Before the wedding day, they celebrate a ceremony known as *Kasi yatra* (pilgrimage to Varanasi). A Brahman priest officiates at their marriages. In Salem District, trained Padmasaliyar priests officiate at marriage rituals. The *thali* is tied around the bride's neck by the bridegroom. Then toe-rings (*mettelu*) are put on her toes. The bride and bridegroom then sit facing each other and sprinkle sacred rice on each other's heads. Consummation of the marriage is on the same day, or on the third day at the bride's residence.

The Padmasaliyar generally bury their dead, but some of them cremate the body. The body is bathed, adorned with a *namam*, wrapped in yellow cloth. They offer seven lemons to it and carry the body on a bier in a prone position to the burial ground. In some areas especially in Chengalpattu, Dharmapuri, Salem and Madurai Districts, it is customary to offer a fowl to the corpse before it is removed from the house. If the death occurs on a Saturday, a fowl is tied to bier, and buried with the body. The death rites are conducted by the Dasari. On the 11th day, they eat vegetarian food and on the 13th day the (*pangaligal*) close relatives of the dead shave their heads and moustaches and offer nonvegetarian food to the dead. They observe ancestor worship annually.

The Padmasaliyar have varied occupations, such as weaving, trading in cloth, rice, coffee seeds and provisions, cultivation and employment in government and private organisations. They employ their children in weaving processes.

The primary occupation of the Padmasaliyar is silk and cotton-weaving. Silk sari production is mainly concentrated in Kanchipuram. They also weave cotton cloths. Men, women and children are all involved in the weaving work. A few Padmasaliyar own land. But most of them are employed in the weaving industry as skilled workers. The first cooperative society for weavers in Tamil Nadu was established in Kanchipuram in 1905. The society started supplies of yarn to the members and also give small cash advances to meet petty expenditure connected with weaving, it takes back the finished goods and sells them in the open market.

The Padmasaliyar living in villages have their own caste

councils. The male elders meet at a place to decide on conflicts, quarrels and other cases. In the towns, a few groups of like-minded people belonging to each surname group assemble in one house and decide on social and religious matters pertaining to the families of the surname group. They do not impose any form of punishment. The Padmasaliyar have their association at regional and state level, Tamil Nadu Padmasaliyar Sangam, which plans and implements welfare activities for the community. This association, with the help of Akhil Bharath Padmasali Mahasabha, is making its efforts to solve the problems of the Padmasaliyar.

There are Vaishnavites and Saivites among the Padmasaliyar. Bhavanarayanaswamy is their caste deity (*kuladeivam*) and is worshipped every Saturday. They also worship Vinayagar, Murugan, Kamakshiamman and Varadarajaswamy and go on pilgrimage to sacred centres like Tirupati, Rameswaram, Srirangam, Palani and Madurai. The Padmasaliyar observe all the Hindu festivals like Sankranti or Pongal, Telugu New Year's Day (Ugadi), Tamil New Year's Day, Sivaratri, Vinayaka Chaturthi, Sriramanavami and Deepavali.

The Padmasaliyar are experts in singing folk-songs and narrating folk-tales, which are taken from the mythological and legendary stories related to the great sages of Mrukandu, Markendeya, Bhrughu, Agasthya and Bhavanarishi. They are experts in music and drama and they sing *bhajans* on the streets in Kanchipuram and Salem towns, attracting many enthusiasts. They believe that the Goddess Lakshmi belongs to their community and was given as a bride to Lord Vishnu. The Padmasaliyar are also expert in the crafts of weaving and cloth embroidery.

The Padmasaliyar accept both cooked and uncooked food from the Brahman and the Arya Vysya, but avoid from other communities. They share funeral grounds with other caste Hindus. The maintain patron-client, landlord-tenant and master-weaver-labourer relationships. They receive the services of the barber and washerman in urban as well as in rural areas.

The Padmasaliyar favour formal education for both boys and girls. Many of them study upto postgraduate level. But drop-outs are there because of economic reasons, as the children

have to help in weaving. Their attitude is favourable towards family planning. They enjoy all civic amenities.

JAKKA PARTHASARATHY

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PAGADAI

The Pagadai live mainly in Ramanathapuram and Madurai Districts. They are also called Chakkiliyan and Arundhatiyar. Arundhati is their tutelary deity and is also known as Mathangi. They claim that they are descended from the Adi Jambava. The legends regarding their origin are the same as those for the Arundhatiyar and the Adi Jambavalu.

The Pagadai of Tamil Nadu are said to have migrated from Andhra Pradesh long ago. Their total population is 17,863 in the 1981 Census. Most of them have forgotton their mother tongue, Telugu and speak Tamil among themselves and with others. Some of them know Telugu. They use the Tamil script. Constitutionally they are placed under the category of Scheduled Castes.

The Pagadai are nonvegetarian, who eat beef and pork too. Their staple foods are rice and millets. They consume all varieties of pulses, vegetables, roots and tubers. Their cooking medium is groundnut oil. They eat fruit moderately. Men take alcoholic drinks occasionally. They drink coffee and tea. Smoking *beedis* and cigarettes, and chewing betel, are common in the community.

Social divisions do not exist among the Pagadai. The Pagadai follow endogamy at the community level and prefer cross-cousin and maternal uncle-niece marriages. The age at marriage is around 18 years for girls and 21 years for boys. Marriages are arranged through negotiation. Monogamy is the norm. In the past, polygamy was prevalent. The *thali* is the marriage symbol. Earlier, *oli* (bride-price) was given. But it has now been replaced by dowry. After marriage, the couple live in the patrilocal residence. Divorce is permitted on grounds of adultery. Either spouse can initiate divorce. Compensation is given to the aggrieved party as decided by the *kula panchayat.* Children are the responsibility of either parent, depending on the situation. Male and female divorcees and widows and widowers can remarry. Sororate and levirate are permitted.

There are both extended and nuclear families in the Pagadai community. In extended families, husband, wife and their

children, both married and unmarried, live together. A joking relationship is permitted among brothers-in-law and between grandparents and grandchildren. There is no avoidance relationship reported. Property is shared by all sons equally. The eldest son succeeds his father as the head of the family.

Pagadai women have a secondary status compared to their men. They do not have any right over ancestral property. They participate in social functions and religious rituals. They earn and contribute to the family income and control family expenditure. Some of them are employed in menial jobs in municipalities. They also help their men in making footwear.

The Pagadai do not observe pre-delivery rituals. The first childbirth takes place at the pregnant woman's natal home. Birth pollution is observed for 11, 13 or 15 days. On the 11th, 13th or 15th day, ceremonial baths are given to both the mother and the ehild. A feast is arranged for all relatives. On the same day, the child is named. Within one year, the tonsuring ceremony is held for the child, in the family deity's temples. At the same time, the ear-boring also takes place. The puberty ritual (*manjal neerattu vizha*) is performed when a girl attains puberty.

Pagadai marriages are generally arranged through negotiation by elders. After completing the negotiations, the alliance is formally confirmed in a ceremony known as *nichayathartham* with the exchange of *thamboolam* (betel and arecanut) by the two parties. This ceremony is conducted at the bride's residence. Weddings take place at the bride's residence or in a temple. The tying of the *thali* around the neck of the bride by the bridegroom is the main wedding ritual. The couple then exchange garlands and are blessed by their elders. A feast is given by the bride's parents. The consummation ceremony takes place on the same day.

The Pagadai bury their dead. Only the firstborn are cremated. When a death occurs, the news is informed to all relatives immediately. The body is bathed and dressed in new clothes. It is carried on a bier to the burial ground, and buried in a prone position. The chief mourner is tonsured on the same day. The youngest son is the chief mourner for the father and the eldest son for the mother. On the third day after the

burial, they go to the burial ground and pour milk on the grave. They observe death pollution for 16 days. On the 16th day, they conduct *karumathi*. The chief mourner is given new clothes by his affinal relatives. A feast is arranged for all relatives. They observe annual death rites.

Very few of the Pagadai own land and cultivate it. They are mainly dependent on leather work, which is their traditional occupation. They prepare shoes, chappals and other leather articles. Their secondary occupations are trading in chappals and shoes, and working as labour or in government service. Some of them are employed in menial services in the municipalities, hotels and hospitals. Some are autodrivers and rickshaw-pullers. They maintain links with the market directly as well as through middlemen. Transactions are made in cash. There are agricultural labourers, industrial labourers and daily wage casual labourers in the community. Wages are paid in cash.

A traditional *kula panchayat* exists among the Pagadai, with the elders of the community as its members. It is a hereditary body and its head is the *thalaivar*. He is assisted by the *upathalaivar, cheyalalar, kanakapillai* and *dhandal*. The function of the council is to arrange marriage alliances and to settle disputes in the community. The council has the power to impose punishments and excommunicate, but generally disputes are settled smoothly through amicable negotiation.

There are both Saivites and Vaishnavites among the Pagadai. They worship deities of the wider pantheon. Sonaiyya, Muniayya and Mathangi are their tutelary deities. Perumal, Murugan and Matamma are some of their family deities. Their sacred specialists are from their own community. They act as priests at their temples. Elders of the community officiate at marriage and death rituals. They observe all Hindu festivals, such as Deepavali, Sankranti, Dussehra and Sivaratri. They perform the Sonaiyya festival once a year.

The Pagadai accept food and water from all communities. They maintain patron-client, landlord-tenant and cultivator-labour relationships with other communities.

The Pagadai do not favour formal education. The boys generally study upto school-leaving. Many drop out from stud-

ies due to poverty or for social reasons. They use modern medicare and favour family planning. They have access to all civic amenities.

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PALLIYAN

The Palliyan are also referred to as Palani Makkal and Palliyar. The Palliyan are found in the Palani Hills of Anna District, the Western Ghats of Kamarajar District, especially in the Senbagathope and Saduragiri hills, the Puliyankudi areas of Tirunelveli District and the Vasasnadu hills and Bodinaikanur area of Madurai District. "They are the original inhabitants of the Palani hills. It is even said that the name Palliyan was derived from Paliyan, which in Tamil means men from Palani. The name of the tribe is known locally as Paliyan and not as Palliyan or Pallyer as indicated in the list of Scheduled Tribes" (Nambiar, 1964). Gardener (1965) reports that "The tribe is located in the hills of Coimbatore, Madurai, Ramnad and Tirunelveli District in the southern extremity of Madras State and to the west in limited adjacent portions of Kerala State. The total population is about 3000 persons in some 65 settlements". According to the Census of India (1981), there are 1818 Palliyan.

The Palliyan once had a habit of leaving their habitat whenever someone was affected with small-pox in their settlement. They left the afflicted person behind, with a pot of cooked food and a pot full of water.

The Palliyan are divided into two subgroups, *viz.* Vana Palliyar and Devya Palliyar. The word *devyam* means 'god' and *vana* means 'jungle or forest'. Devya Palliyar are clean and take baths regularly. The difference between these two groups is that the Vana Palliyar eat snakes, such as python, whereas the Devya Palliyar do not eat snakes. There are no commensal and marital relations between the groups, although the Vana Palliyar eat the food offered by the Devya Palliyar. Devya Palliyar live in the Kodaikanal area of the Palani Hills and the Vana Palliyar live in the Bodinaikanur area of Madurai District. They live in thatched huts in rocky places. They speak Tamil.

Thurston (1909) describes them so: "Like other primitive tribes, the Palliyans are short in stature and dolichocephalic and the archaic type of nose persists in some individuals with an average of 150.9 cm and a nasal index of 83." "They are

generally black or dark brown in complexion. Some have flat noses and thick lips. The women have oval faces. Men have scanty beards. They have very little hair on the head but it cannot be said that they are frizzly as in the case of Kadars" (Nambiar, 1964).

Men nowadays cut their head hair, but there are still some old men with tufts of hair. Men wear dhotis and women wear saris. Palliyan women wear a few strings of glassbeads and coral. They wear nose-rings and earrings. The Palliyan woman's dress and tattoo marks are distinctive.

Rice, *kambu, cholam* and *ragi* are their staple foods. The Palliyan are nonvegetarian, but do not eat beef. They however, eat pork and animal meat from the wild. They consume wild roots and forest greens. The Palliyan drink black coffee and black tea. Men drink liquor and most men and women chew tobacco and betel leaves. Young men smoke *beedis* and cigarettes.

The Palliyan have lineages termed *kottu* for marriage regulation. They are Kottamalai Palliyar Kottu, Loil Palliyar Kottu, Periya Cadayan Kottu and Buda Palliyar Kottu.

Most Palliyan live in nuclear families. They are a patrilineal and patriarchal society. The father or husband is the head of the family. A joking relationship is permitted between brothers-in-law and sisters-in-law. Male equigeniture is the rule of inheritance. The eldest son succeeds as the head of the family after his father's death. According to Nambiar (1964), "Earlier accounts about Palliyans describe them as living on platforms, up trees, in caves or under rocks". Nowadays, the Palliyan build their huts with locally available material. Usually their houses have thatched roofs made of wild grass known as *taragu pullu*. In a few places, the Palliyan use dried plantain leaves for thatching roofs and walls.

Palliyan women have a lower status than their men. They participate in all social functions and religious rituals. The women do all the domestic work. Grandparents take care of the children. Women also collect fuel and fodder and work as agricultural or casual labourers to support their families.

From the seventh to ninth month of her pregnancy, the Palliyan woman is given nutritious food. Usually, the first

childbirth takes place in her natal home. During the delivery, a billhook and a fishing net are placed by the side of the pollution shed to keep away evil spirits. The umbilical cord and placenta are usually put in a pot and buried in a place close by the hut. After the delivery, the mother drinks only a sweetened decoction prepared out of ginger, pepper and *tippili,* called *kayammarundu,* for three days.

When a Palliyan girl attains puberty, she is secluded in a hut called *muttu gudise.* While she is in the hut, no man is permitted to see her. When entering the hut she has to take a palm bark bow called *Arjunan vil* with her. The girl comes out of the hut on the 13th day and the hut is pulled down and thrown into a stream. Elderly women pour seven pots of water on the girl. Her brothers-in-law and prospective bride-grooms throw on her balls of cowdung and pods of *calotropis.* Usually the girl is expected to bathe in seven streams before she is admitted into the house.

The Palliyan prefer cross-cousin marriages. The age usually at marriage for girls ranges from 16-19 years and for boys 18 or more. Marriage by elopement is prevalent and it is later regularised. Monogamy is the norm. Polygamy is, however, permitted. Widow and widower marriages are also common. They follow the patrilocal residence after marriage. Marital alliances are fixed by negotiation. A token bride-price of Rs.1.50 is paid. The bridegroom presents the bride with a nose-screw, a pair of earrings and a sari at the time of the betrothal. The marriage takes place in the bridegroom's house. A *thali,* which is a 'W'-shaped pendant, is tied by the bridegroom around the neck of the bride. In some cases, instead of the *thali,* a string of beads is tied by the bridegroom. They now also use marriage symbols such as turmeric thread with a silver coin. During the wedding, the Palliyan boy and girl exchange betel, salt and turmeric, take a vow to live together and bow before the Palliyan headman, the parents and maternal uncles of both bride and bridegroom, and all the adults of the Palliyan settle-ment. A feast is given to relatives and the men and women dance, separately. Divorce is permitted for either spouse. Divorced men and women can remarry.

The Palliyan bury their dead. They dig the pit in the north-

south direction and the head is placed towards the south with the face upwards. On the third day, they pour milk near the grave. They have no separate burial ground. They bury the body wherever there is a convenient spot. *Karumathi* (final funeral ceremony) is celebrated on the seventh or ninth day and a feast is given.

The major economic resource for the Palliyan is land and forest produce. They are a landless community. They collect wild roots, yams and honey and hunt animals for food. They are semi-nomadic, paid workers, who gather forest produce for contractors. Nowadays, the majority of them are either agricultural or plantation labourers. They are experts in honey collection and hunting methods. The children also work as daily wage labour to support their families. The Palliyan receive wages in both cash and kind. Most of them have quit their nomadic way of life and have settled down.

The headman of the Palliyan settlement is called *nattamai* or *nattamaikkaran* or *thalaivan*. This post is hereditary, in the patrilineal line following male primogeniture. The head of the settlement can impose cash fines. Nambiar (1964) mentions that "The tribal hierarchy of the Palliyans is weak, without any overall headman for the entire tribe. Intersettlement has, however, a headman. He is called by the name *muthiri* in the Sirumalai area, as *nattamaikaran* or *nattamai* in Senbakathope and Thandikudi areas and as *kanikaran* in Tirunelveli District. His authority is limited to the settlement in which he lives". The assistant to the head of the settlement is called *kambalian* in Sirumalai and *tandakkaran* in Tandikudi areas of Kodaikkanal.

Like other food-gatherers, the Palliyan follow the tribal religion. Of late, they have started worshipping Hindu deities. Some of them have taken to Christianity. Every settlement has two to seven deities of both sexes. Pallichiyamman is a deity found in all the settlements. Some of them go to Alagarkoil and Palani to worship Alagar and Murugan respectively. They also worship Paimalai, Rakki, Kottamalai, Karuppasami, Velappasami and Peechiyamman. They celebrate Adi and Pongal. They offer animals and fowls as sacrifices to the local deities. During festival days, the Palliyan dance and play their drums.

The Palliyan use musical instruments, such as pipes and drums. They have a rich repertoire of folklore and folk-songs.

The Palliyan accept both cooked and uncooked food from all castes. They do not eat in the Pulayan's house. They participate in all the ceremonial occasions. They share well and water sources with other communities. They visit the religious shrines of Hindus. Most of them are employed in agricultural labour. They maintain the cultivator-labour relationship.

The Palliyan make use of health centres. The literacy rate among them is low. Very few of them send their sons to school. Girls are not sent to school. Most of their hamlets have no schools.

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PAMULA

The Pamula live in the border districts of Tamil Nadu and Andhra Pradesh. They are semi-nomadic in nature and migrate from Madras and the neighbourhood to the South Arcot District during the harvest season. *Pamula* is a Telugu word for 'snake charmer'. They are known as 'Pambatti' in Tamil Nadu. Thurston (1909) states that the word Pamula is used as a synonym for Jogi and adds the Telugu-speaking Jogi also have the same profession as the Pamula, *i.e.* snake-charming, and have marital relations with them. "Hence, in their locality they are known as Jogis and in Madras are called Pamula or Pambeti." They are easily identified through their profession. When they come out from their homes seeking alms, they usually wear a khaki shirt and a lungi and drape a python around their shoulders. They hold a snake-charming flute in one hand and a bag containing their luggage in the other. Their mother tongue is Telugu. They speak both Telugu and Tamil and use the Tamil script.

The Pamula are nonvegetarian, but do not eat beef. They however, eat pork and the meat of animals from the wild. They are unhygienic in their habits and environment. Their staple foods are rice, millets and *ragi*. They eat pulses, tubers and vegetables. They use groundnut oil for cooking. They drink tea and coffee. Both men and women take liquor. Most of them smoke *beedis* and cigarettes. They chew tobacco with betel and use snuff.

There are no social divisions in the Pamula community except for a number of *intiperlu* (surnames). They are exogamous in nature and regulate marriage alliances. These are broadly divided into *sahodara* (brotherly group) and *bavamaridi* (brother-in-law) groups. Marriages are prohibited between *sahodara* groups, as all of them belong to the same blood group. Some *sahodara* names are Jalli, Dasarapu, Bindi, Pindallu and Vajullu. Marriages take place between Sahodara and the Bavamaridi groups. The self-perception of the community at regional level is very low, being snake-charmers.

The age at marriage is around 25 years for boys and 20 for girls. Bride-price is paid. The mode of acquiring a mate is by negotiation. Monogamy is the norm. *Pasupunulu daram* (tur-

meric thread) and *mettelu* (toe-ring) are the symbols of a married woman. Divorce is allowed. Widows, widowers and male and female divorcees may remarry. Grounds for divorce are adultery, barrenness, impotence and cruelty.

Mostly Pamula live in nuclear families. Avoidance relations are between mother-in-law and son-in-law and father-in-law and daughter-in-law. Joking relationships are between eldest brother's wife and husband's younger brother and with wife's younger sister, grandparents with grandchildren, and elder sister's husband with wife's brother. Property is generally shared by male equigeniture. The rule of residence is patrilocal and the rule of descent is patrilineal. Succession is traced through the eldest son in a family.

Pamula women are treated as equal to men. Women do domestic chores and participate in agricultural operations. Women have decision-making powers and control family expenditure. They do not take part in the mechanism of social control. They participate in social and religious activities.

The *seemantham* ritual is observed in the seventh or ninth month of a Pamula woman's first pregnancy. *Theetu* (pollution) is observed by the mother for nine days after childbirth. During this period, she is not allowed into the main house to do any chores. On the tenth day, the child and the mother are both given purificatory baths and a feast is arranged in the evening. The gathering blesses the child and gives *sadivimpulu* (gifts) either in kind or cash.

Rujuvu (puberty ceremony) is performed when a Pamula girl attains menarche. A new hut is erected by the *menamama* (maternal uncle) outside the house and the girl is asked to sit in it for nine days. On the tenth day, the girl is given a ritualistic bath and allowed into the house. In the evening she is adorned like a bride and sometimes marital relations are also fixed with the maternal uncle. The clothes used by the girl are traditionally given to the washerwoman.

Marriage (*pendi*) is officiated at by the Pamula headman. It is celebrated in the bride's home. Marriage rituals include *kankanam kattadam* (tying the *thali*), *rolurokali kariyam* (ritual of pestle and mortar) and *muhurtham* (wedding). The *malugu* (consummation ceremony) takes place in the bride's natal home.

The dead among the Pamula are buried. *Karamantralu* (death rituals) are performed on the 9th and 16th days. The body, wrapped in a white cloth and decorated with flowers, is carried on a *padai* (bier) made of green bamboo poles to the burial ground. The dead are annually worshipped on *peddala panduga* day.

Begging, with the help of a python, is the primary occupation of the Pamula community. Agricultural labour is treated as a secondary occupation of the womenfolk, whereas domestic chores is their first duty. The snakes are trapped in the forests of Nagalapuram, Nagiri, Pichachaturu, Rayachoti, and Kodambedu of Andhra Pradesh. Some of the Pamula rear pigs as a secondary occupation.

The Pamula do not have a traditional caste council, but offences such as theft, adultery and elopement are settled by the elders of the community.

The Pamula are Hindus. Muniswamy is their caste deity and Karemalemma is their village deity. They consider the Muniswamy festival very important. To fulfil the vows made by them, they sacrifice pigs to the deity. The tradition is that *sahodarulu* sacrifice sows, whereas the *bavamaridi* sacrifice male pigs. They celebrate Dussehra, Deepavali, Sankranti and Pongal. Sacred specialists are engaged from their own community for marriage and death rites. They have an oral tradition consisting of folk-songs and folk-tales.

Traditionally, the Pamula accept cooked food and water from all castes except from the Irula and the Scheduled Castes, Muslims and Christians living in the area. They have free access to public places like the burial grounds. They have cultivator-labour relations. The literacy rate is very low among the Pamula. Family planning measures are being adopted by them. They are practitioners of indigenous medicine. They avail of other modern amenities.

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PANAN

The Panan are distributed chiefly in the Kanniyakumari District and sparsely in the Tirunelveli, Chidambaranar and Madurai Districts. Those from the Kanniyakumari District and the Shenkottah taluk of Tirunelveli District are Scheduled Castes. They migrated to their present habitat from the south Malabar region of the present Kerala State. They are also referred to as Panar. Other communities refer to them as Mestri. According to the 1981 Census, the total number of Panan in Kanniyakumari District and Shenkottah taluk of Tirunelveli District is 209. Most of them speak Tamil but some who live in the bordering areas of Tamil Nadu and Kerala know both Tamil and Malayalam. The Panan are traditional tailors and umbrella-makers who use the title Mestri. They used to be employed as tailors by Moolam Tirunal Maharaja of Travancore (Chockalingam, 1971).

Panan is derived from the word *pan* meaning 'music' (Thurston, 1909). There are references in Tamil literature to Panan who sing in praise of kings and seek gifts. There was a Perumpanan who used the big *yal* (musical instrument) and Sirupanan who used the small *yal*. They are said to have come from Yalpanam (Jaffna) in Sri Lanka (Chockalingam, 1971) and were patronised by the ancient Tamil kings. Later, they took up tailoring as a profession. In the past, the womenfolk enlarged their ear-lobes and wore ear ornaments named *pambadam*, but now they wear ear-studs (*kammal*).

The Panan are nonvegetarian, but do not eat beef or pork. Their staple food is rice. They consume all kinds of vegetables, roots and pulses. Groundnut or gingelly oil is used for cooking. They occasionally take alcoholic drinks. Consumption of fruits, milk and milk products is rare. They drink coffee and tea regularly. Some of them smoke *beedis* or cigarettes and some chew betel with or without tobacco. Some use snuff.

The Panan are an endogamous group. Originally, the Panan had four subdivisions in South Malabar, namely, Tirurengan, Kodaketti (umbrella-tying), Meenpidi (fish-catching) and Pulluvan, of which the last-named is inferior to the other three (Thurston, 1909). The Panan in Tamil Nadu do not have any

subgroups. The Panan living in the Kanniyakumari District and Shengottai taluk of Tirunelveli District have marital relations with those from other districts. In the *varna* order, they are Sudras.

The Panan prefer to live in joint families, but a few of them have established nuclear families. The husband or father is the head of the family. In case of the premature death of the head of the family, the eldest son, becomes the family head. Succession is by the eldest son. Ancestral properties are equally distributed between brothers and sisters. The responsibility to look after old parents lies with the sons only. The Panan are a patrilineal society with patrilocal residence.

Though Panan women have a secondary status they are given due respect and have the right to divorce their husbands in case of ill-treatment. They assist their menfolk in tailoring. They have joking relations with their sisters-in-law and brothers-in-law. They are consulted in all family activities, but do not have decision-making powers. They get shares in parental property. Girls are educated.

The Panan woman is taken to her natal home for her first delivery, during the seventh or ninth month of pregnancy. Her parents present bangles to her and bless her. Generally, an elderly woman or the local barber woman attends at the delivery. The child is given *cenai* (sugar water or palm jaggery water) by an elderly woman immediately after initial bath. Birth pollution is observed for 41 days. On the 13th day, the child's paternal grandparents arrange *kayaru kattuthal* (tying of thread) ceremony. The child is placed in a winnow and its paternal grandmother ties a yellow thread around its waist. The affluent tie a silver or gold chain. A vegetarian feast is served to all relatives. The child is also named on this day. Children are usually named after deities or dead relatives. Relatives present gifts to the child on this day. The mother and the child are brought home after three months. The tonsuring ceremony is held at the family deity's temple or in the Murugan temple. The barber who shaves the child's head is given a coconut, two bananas and some cash. The ear-boring is also performed on this day and the *asari* (goldsmith) who does it is also given a coconut, two bananas and some cash.

On attaining puberty, a Panan girl is secluded for ten days and given a ceremonial bath on an auspicious day. All the relatives and the maternal uncle are informed. The maternal uncle brings fruits, sweets and flowers. When the girl is given her bath, the women cry out and make a sound called *kulavai.* The puberty ceremony (*sadangu*) is observed within three months. The maternal uncle presents a sari to the girl, which she wears on this day. A Brahman priest conducts the puja with three *kumbams* (water pots). He is given a dhoti, a towel, rice, vegetables and cash. The girl is garlanded and all the elders bless her by applying *tiruneeru* (sacred ash) on her forehead. Relatives gift her cash or gifts. A vegetarian feast is served.

Marriages are arranged by parents though negotiation. The boy's parents approach the girl's parents. The horoscopes of the boy and the girl are matched. If they agree, the betrothal ceremony is arranged in the girl's house. The boy's parents visit the girl's house with their relatives and fix the dowry amount and the marriage date. The girl wears the betrothal sari and a garland. Panan boys generally get married at the age of 23-25 while girls are married at 18-21. The *thali* is the marriage symbol. The *thali* is a gold disc with the image of Pillaiyar engraved on it. In the past, they paid bride-price, but this has now been replaced by dowry. The wedding is held in the boy's house. A *pandal* is erected in front of the house, with a decorated dais in it. Persons from the Pandaram community decorate the marriage dais. A Brahman priest conducts the wedding. The chief wedding ritual is the tying of the *thali.* The bride and bridegroom exchange garlands three times. The elders bless them by applying sacred ash on their foreheads. They are taken inside the house and are given milk and bananas. The marriage sari and *thali* are presented by the bridegroom's parents. A vegetarian feast is given to all relatives. The officiating Brahman is given a dhoti, a towel, rice, vegetables, coconut and some cash. After the marriage, the couple visit the bride's house and return to the bridegroom's house. The consummation of the marriage takes place at the bridegroom's residence.

Divorce and widow remarriage are permitted. Usually di-

vorce cases are resolved by the Panan elders. The husband has to return the dowry amount to the wife in case of separation. The children are the responsibility of the father. A divorced woman may remarry. Of late, the rate of divorce is decreasing among the Panan.

The Panan cremate their dead. The body is garlanded and a 25 paise coin is kept on the forehead. An oil lamp and a broken coconut are kept by the side of the body. A small *pandal* is erected in front of the house. All the relatives are informed. The corpse is bathed and is wrapped in a white-cloth. The body is placed on the bier and women offer *vaikkarisi* (rice) before it is lifted off. The eldest son performs the *kolli* ceremony at the cremation ground by breaking a pot full of water. The heads of all sons of the deceased are shaved. If a husband dies, the widow's *thali* and bangles are removed on the same day. On the second day, they go to the cremation site to offer milk and nine varieties of cereals to the deceased. On that day, they collect the ashes and dispose of them in a nearby river or sea. On the 16th day, the death ceremony is observed. The sons take oilbaths and the relatives give them new clothes. The widow gets new clothes from her brothers. The barber who assists in the death-ritual is paid in cash and kind.

The primary occupation of the Panan men is tailoring, their traditional occupation. A handful of Panan work in government service.

Though a traditional caste panchayat does not exist among the Panan, the community's elders solve their disputes.

Muttaramman is the community deity of the Panan. They also worship Murugan, Ganesh, Siva, Vishnu and other deities, *viz.* Kaliamman, Mariamman, Madasamy and Karuppasamy. Their major festivals are Deepavali, Pongal, Thirukkarthigai and Adi.

Though the Panan are traditionally tailors, they do not form a service community to any group in particular where they live. They sew clothes for all people and charge them. They receive services from the Brahman, barbers and washermen. In rural areas, they have separate wells and cremation grounds. Their relations with other communities of the area are cordial.

The villages and towns which the Panan inhabit have all public amenities. They favour family planning.

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PANDARAM

The Pandaram are the traditional temple servants of the Murugan temple in Palani in the Anna District. They are known as the Sixty four Mirasu Pandaram. Etymologically, the word 'Pandaram' is derived from *bandaram*, a public treasury. Indeed, most of them were the managers of Siva temples in South India. They use the title Pillai and are custodians of the temple treasures (Thurston, 1909).

Regarding their origin, it is recorded that "they are desended from an Aryan King, who came to god with the hope of getting rubies from him. The god, in the guise of a Brahman, tested his devotion by making him fill a magic vessel with Cauvery water. The vessel would not fill, and the Aryan stranger in a fit of anger cut off the Brahman's head. The dead body at once turned into a *lingam*, and the Aryan was ordered to carry water for the temple till eternity" (Thurston, 1909). However, the people in Palani who carry water from the nearby river, Varattaru, for Lord Murugan's *abishekam* (puja) feel they belong to the Vellalar caste and do not call themselves Desikar. Nor do they chant mantras. The oral tradition that prevails among them reveals that they are descendants of the 64 followers of a non-Brahman saint called Pulippandi Pattira Udaiyar who used to perform puja at the Murugan temple. But when the Madurai king Thirumalai Nayakkar visited the temple, his minister Ramappa Iyer, who was Brahman by caste, brought two Brahmans from the nearby village of Kodumudi to perform the puja as he could not accept the *tiruneeru* (sacred ash) from a non-Brahman saint. From that time onwards the Brahmans became the pujaris and the followers of the saint began to assist them in bringing water, supplying flowers and other activities connected with the worship. Service in time became hereditary and made them continue to live in Palani. Thus, the Pandaram are an occupational group. The Pandaram of Palani are identified in the temple by the chain each wears around his neck. Each chain has the wearer's photograph in it.

The Pandaram are vegetarian. A few of them are occasional nonvegetarian. Their staple food is rice supplemented with

pulses. They consume all varieties of vegetables. They use groundnut oil and gingelly oil for cooking and coconut oil for hair-dressing. They drink coffee and tea regularly. They do not take alcoholic drinks, but a few smoke *beedis* or cigarettes, chew betel with or without tobacco, and use snuff.

The Pandaram are an endogamous group. According to Thurston (1909) it has two main subdivisions, the Abhisheka (who have to be initiated with some ceremonies connected with Siva) and the Desikar (often used as a title). There are atleast four distinct groups *viz.*, Andi or Andippandaram (ascetics), Poopandaram (garland-makers and temple servants for village deities), Valluva Pandaram (horoscopists and temple servants) and Pandaram (servants in Murugan temples) In Tamil Nadu. However, the Mirasu Pandaram living in Palani recognise only two endogamous groups among them based on the food habit — vegetarian and nonvegetarian and do not have social relations with other Pandarams.

Monogamy is the norm among the Pandaram. They prefer and practise consaguineous marriages. Marriage by negotiation is the mode of acquiring a mate. The age at marriage is 25-27 years for boys and 17-20 for girls. The custom of dowry in place of bride-price exists. The *thali* (a yellow thread with a pendant bearing the emblem of the sun and moon) called *perunthali* is the marriage symbol. Divorce and widow remarriages are not allowed.

Nuclear families predominate among the Pandaram. Inheritance of property is by male equigeniture and succession is by the eldest son. There are no awoidance relationships, but joking relations exists between brother-in-law and sisters-in-law.

Pandaram women mostly confine themselves to domestic work. They participate in all social and religious actitivites along with their menfolk. They do not have rights to parental property. However, they get a share from the mother's property, if any. Some of them have school and collegiate education. A few work in various institutions.

A Pandaram woman's first delivery takes place in her parents' house. The parents come to her in-laws' house with preparations like *murukku* and sweetmeats. *Valaikappu* is performed during the seventh or ninth month and a feast is served

to all the relatives. The girl is then taken to her natal home. The wife of the barber or any experienced elderly woman attends on the delivery. She is paid money and given a sari. Birth pollution lasts for 16 days and a Brahman performs *punyavachanam* on the 16th day. Then follows the naming of the child according to its birth star. The tonsuring and ear-boring ceremonies are conducted after three months. The maternal uncle presents it ear-studs at the ear-boring ceremony.

On attaining puberty, a Pandaram girl is kept in a separate place and is given a ritual bath on an auspicious day within three days of menarche. Her maternal uncle brings her sweets, flowers and bananas. He gives her a sari also. Pollution is observed for 13-16 days. On the 13th or 16th day, they perform the puberty ceremony. The maternal uncle presents the girl a sari. A feast is arranged for all the relatives and they give presents to the girl.

A Pandaram boy's parents initiate the marriage alliance. The betrothal ceremony is arranged in the girl's place. The boy's parents purchase the betrothal sari. Marriage is at the bridegroom's place. His parents buy the marriage sari and the *thali*. A Brahman priest officiates at the functions. After pronouncing the necessary mantras, he gives the *thali* to the bridegroom who ties it around the neck of the bride. The bridegroom's sister assists him in tying the *thali*. Consummation of the marriage takes place at the bride's place on the same day.

The Pandaram cremate their dead. The body is bathed with water brought from nearby well or tank, clad in new clothes and garlanded. It is taken on a bier in procession to the cremation ground. The barber blows the conch-shell in the funeral procession. The eldest son performs *kolli* at the cremation ground by breaking the earthern pot containing water and lights the pyre. A Parayan helps in the cremation. The day after the cremation, the milk-pouring ceremony is performed at the cremation ground. They collect the ashes and dispose them of in nearby river. Pollution is observed for 16 days and terminates with the *uttirakiri* ceremony. On the 17th day, they perform the oil-bathing ceremony when the relatives offer new clothes to the sons of the deceased. The wife of the

deceased gets new clothes from her parents in-laws on the day of the cremation. She removes the *thali* on the 15th day.

Being traditional temple servants, the Pandaram at Palani temple receive a 50 per cent share in the amount collected for *archanai* and *ciramatatchanai*. In the Tamil month of *Aippasi*, the Kandar Sasti Urcavam is celebrated, at which they perform the Sura Samharam (killing of the Asura). This is done by two Pandaram and the performance is called *nersam*. Some of them have petty businesses and a few of the educated are in white-collar jobs. Very few practise agriculture.

The Pandaram have their own association to look after their welfare. But this association has nothing to do with the other Vellalar caste association and the caste panchayat. They have elected members to run their association. Only the 64 Pandarams, who are called a Mirasu Pandaram are members of this association.

All Pandaram are Hindus. They mainly worship Lord Murugan of Palani. They also worship deities like Kaliamman and Mariamman. The major festivals celebrated by them are Deepavali, Pongal, Karthigai and Thaippusam.

The Pandaram accept food and water from other communities of equal social rank. They enjoy the services of the barber and washerman communities. But the Brahman, with whom they move freely in temple services, neither eat with them nor allow them to eat, in their houses. They have separate cremation grounds. The Pandaram favour formal education. Their children get free education and free medical treatment from the temple trust. They avail of hospital facilities. Their attitude towards family planning is favourable. They enjoy all civic amenities.

S. MANOHARAN

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PANIYAN

The Paniyan are distributed in Tamil Nadu and the adjoining areas of Kerala and Karnataka. Their concentration is more in Kerala State. The other communities call them Paniyachi and Adivasi. The term 'Paniyan' is derived from *panikkar*, meaning 'labourer'. The name is a modified form of the Malayalam word *panikkan* (Luiz, 1962). "Their legendary origin is at a place called Ippimala and they are descended from *pantirappannara* (twelve ancestors)" according to Kuliraṇi (1984). "Of their origin nothing definite is known" (Thurston, 1909). The distribution of the community is at the regional level. They mainly live in the Nilgiris District. According to the 1981 Census, their population was 6393. They speak their own dialect, Karinji, among themselves. They speak Tamil and Malayalam with others and use the Tamil script. Constitutionally they are a Scheduled Tribe. Their clothes give identity to the community. They wear a *mundu* (lower garment) and *kuppigi* (upper garment). The women wear ornaments of palm leaves (*ola* and *lolok* for the ears, *mukkuthi* for the nose). Both men and women are tattooed on their bodies.

The Paniyan are a dark-skinned people of short stature. Their average height is 157.4 cm. They possess broad noses with an average nasal index of 95. Their hair is curly or wavy. In limb length, these people show affinity to the long-limbed African Negroes (Thurston, 1909).

The Paniyan are nonvegetarian, who do not eat beef but who eat pork. Rice, millets and *ragi* are their staple foods. They consume pulses, vegetables, roots and tubers, and fruit. Men take alcoholic drinks regularly, while the women drink it occasionally. They also drink fresh palm juice. They consume milk and milk products. They are habitual smokers of *beedis* and cigarettes. Chewing of tobacco and betel is very common. Some of them inhale snuff.

Social divisions exist among the Paniyan at *illam* (clan) level. The function of the *illam* is to indicate descent and regulate marriage alliances. Some of the *illams* are Anjali, Vallatte, Manivankodan, Pappali, Arikodan, Ambilian, Kalpattavan,

Kanavanivan, Cerambadian and Perier. They claim superior status over such communities as the Pallan, the Parayan and the Chakkiliyan.

The Paniyan follow endogamy at the community level and exogamy at the *illam* (clan) level. Marriages are performed at around 20 for boys and after the attainment of puberty for girls. Marriage by negotiation, by mutual consent, by exchange of sisters and by elopement are the usual modes of acquiring a mate. Monogamy is the norm. In the past, polygamy was allowed. The marriage symbol is the *thali*. Their *thali* is otherwise known as *kalle* (necklace of beads). Bride-price (*parisa panam*) is paid in cash. Dowry is given in cash and kind. They follow the patrilocal rule of residence after marriage. Divorce is permitted with social approval. The grounds for divorce are adultery, maladjustment and cruelty. Either spouse can initiate divorce. Compensation is awarded to the aggrieved spouse by the *kula panchayat*. The children are the responsibility of either parent, as decided by the *kula panchayat*. Remarriage is permitted for both male and female divorcees. Widow and widower remarriage are also permitted. Sororate is allowed.

The nuclear family predominates in the Paniyan community. An avoidance relationship is reported between mother-in-law and son-in-law and between daughter-in-law and father-in-law. A joking relationship is permitted between affinal relatives and cross-cousins and between grandparents and grandchildren. They follow the Hindu law of inheritance. All sons get equal shares in ancestral property. The eldest son succeeds his father as head of the family.

Paniyan women have a secondary status compared to their men. They participate in family decision-making. They earn and contribute to family income by participating in economic activities, besides doing domestic work. They have a role in agricultural operations. They participate in rituals, festivals and social functions.

The Paniyan do not observe elaborate life-cycle rituals. They observe the pre-delivery *valaikappu* for pregnant women. It is conducted during the seventh or ninth month of the first pregnancy. In this ritual, the pregnant woman is made to wear *valai* (bangles) given by her mother and the elders bless her

for a safe confinement. The first delivery usually takes place at the pregnant woman's natal home. Birth pollution lasts for 12 days and a ceremonial bath is given to both the mother and the child on the 12th day. No ceremony is conducted for naming the child. The children are given the names of their ancestors or deities.

Kudisal kuttirudu (puberty rites) is observed when a girl attains puberty. She is secluded for seven days. On the seventh day, she is given a ceremonial bath and purificatory rites are observed. They invite their relatives for the occasion and serve them a feast.

Paniyan weddings take place at the bride's residence. For marriage negotiations, the bridegroom's party usually visits the bride's house three times. On the third visit, the *thali,* nose-ring, bangles, a white *dhoti*, rice, salt, chillies, coconut oil, sweets, betel and arecanuts, which have been brought by the bridegroom's party, are kept in the bride's residence in front of the *tena* (place of worship). Later, the bride comes out and takes away these offerings. This shows her willingness to accept the alliance. She is then dressed and adorned with the ornaments brought by the father's sister or mother's sister or brother. Then one of the women ties the *kalle* (beads necklace) around the bride's neck. The date for the final rituals is fixed on the same day. A feast is arranged for relatives on this occasion. The final rituals involve the Paniyan priest, attired in ritual robes, invoking the spirits of the ancestors. The priest, while invoking the spirits, becomes possessed by them. He comes out to the open courtyard and performs a dance, accompanied by music, around the bridegroom. The belief is that the spirits of the ancestors are giving their blessings to the couple. The priest then anoints the bridegroom and bride with oil. The *kalle* (bead necklace), marriage bangles, marriage *panam* (an amount of money) are then kept on their heads and a towel tied around it. Another towel is tied around their waists. After the couple are blessed by the priest and the elders, a feast is served. The consummation ceremony takes place at the bridegroom's residence.

The Paniyan bury their dead. The body is bathed and anointed with oil. It is covered with a new white cloth. The

chief mourner places *panam* (an amount of money) on the body and pours a few drops of coconut water in the mouth of the deceased. This is done by other members of the family as well. The corpse is then carried on a *padai* (bier) to the burial ground. There, the *chemmi* (sacred specialist for death rites) chooses the place for burial and marks it with some soil. A pit is made at that place and the body is placed in it. Each relative drops a handful of soil into the pit and then it is covered with leafy branches, thorny bushes and soil. The *chemmi* goes around the grave three times with a pot filled with cowdung and milk and then the pot is broken by throwing it at the side of the grave where the head is. Rice is now dropped on the grave by the priest. The *chemmi* prays to the ancestors, seeking their protection till the end of the pollution period. Then the mourners bathe and return home. They observe pollution for seven days. The *pula* (pollution) ceremony is observed on the seventh day. Ancestor worship is an important feature of the community. "They believe in the existence of the soul after death" (Luiz, 1962). Ancestral worship is observed by them during marriage and death ceremonies.

The natural resources on which the Paniyan community's economy depends are land and forest. It is mainly a landless community. Their traditional and present occupations are hunting and gathering, fishing, horticulture, trapping of birds and animals, and terrace and settled cultivation. They collect minor forest produce and sell it in the market. They maintain links with the market directly as well as through middlemen. Transactions are in cash. Landlessness is causing an increase in the number of agricultural, daily wage, plantation and industrial labourers among them. Child labour is reported. Wages are paid in cash and kind. Their economic condition is poor and they mainly depend on labour.

The traditional caste council exists in the Paniyan community for social control. It is a hereditary body which consists of eight members known as *mudalir* (headman). They are designated *chemmi, kuttan, chetti, karayima, kudarambamupan, onimoolakaraj, puthiala* and *kulakaran*. The *kuttan* is the head of the council and the sacred specialist who performs worship in the temple and officiates at birth and marriage rituals. The

chemmi performs the death rites. The *kulakaran* looks after the arrangments for puja (worship) and festivities at the temple, such as decorating the temple, preparation of food and cleaning of vessels. The *puthiala* takes care of the economic affairs of the community, such as providing the work for them and distributing wages. The *kudarambamupan* acts as the adviser in settling cases and the *onimoolakaraj* investigates disputes. The council has powers to excommunicate and impose cash as well as physical punishments. The cases that the council takes up are quarrels, adultery, rape, elopement, theft, disputes over land and water, disrespect for traditional norms and divorce. Cash punishments are imposed usually in cases like theft, rape, elopement, seduction and adultery. Interethnic marriages call for social boycott. Disrespect for traditional norms also sometimes leads to social boycott. If a member does not obey the advice of the headman, he is banned from attending social functions. Divorce is sanctioned by the council. Sometimes cash fines are imposed in divorce cases.

The Paniyan follow tribal religion and Hindusim. "Paniyans are still animists and the temples they construct consist of layers of stone" (Luiz, 1962). They worship Kulian, Mariamman, Thamburratti or Bhagavatiamman. They also worship the spirits of their ancestors during the marriage ceremony and seek their blessings. They observe yearly festivals for their family and clan deities. Their sacred specialitists are their own and are known as *Kuttan* and *Chemmi*.

The Paniyan are good basket-makers. They make fishing and trapping devices. They have an oral traditions consisting of folk-songs. *Thundi* (drum) and *kuyal* (wind instrument) are the important musical instruments used by them.

The Paniyan accept food and water from communities such as the Brahman, Nair, Chettiar, Kurumba, Toda and Naicker. They do not accept food and water from communities such as the Pallan, Parayan and Chakkiliyan. They have a separate burial ground. They prohibit marital relations with other communities. They share wells and other water sources with others. They participate in socioreligious festivals and festivities. They maintain patron-client, landlord-tenant and cultivator-labourer relationships with other communities.

The Paniyan favour formal education for their children. They drop out from studies mainly due to poverty. They use traditional as well as modern medicare and favour family planning. They have access to all civic amenities.

D. XAVIOUR

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PANNADI

The Pannadi are described as one of the divisions of the Pallan. Thurston (1909) states that they are the Jati Pillais of the Pandya Kammalan, of the Madura country. The story goes that, long ago, the headman of the Pallan came begging to the Kollan section of the Pandya Kammalan, who were employed in the manufacture of ploughs and other agricultural implements and said, "Worshipful sirs, we are destitute to the last degree. If you would but take pity on us, we would become your slaves. Give us ploughs and other implements and we shall ever afterwards obey you". The Kollan, taking pity on them, gave them the implements and they commenced an agricultural life. When the harvest was over, they presented the best portion of the crop to the Kollan. From that time, the Pallan became the sons of the Pandya Kammalan to whom, even now, they make offerings in gratitude for a bumper crop. During census surveys, the Pallan return a number of subdivisions: in fact, there is a proverb that you can count the number of varieties of rice, but it is impossible to count the divisions of the Pallan, who say they are born of the sweat of Devendra, the king of the gods. It is said that when this sweat fell on a plant growing in water, there emerged from the flower a child, who is said to have been the original ancestor of the Pallan. The Konga Pannadi of Coimbatore wear a big *thali*, said to be the emblem of Sakti, while the other subgroups wear a small *thali*. Devendrakulathan and Pallan are the two synonyms of the Pannadi. They are distributed in the districts of Coimbatore, Periyar, Thanjavur and Tiruchchirappalli. The Pannadi are original inhabitants of Tamil Nadu. Their mother tongue is Tamil and they use the Tamil script. They are one of the Scheduled Castes of Tamil Nadu. According to the 1981 Census, the Pannadi population was 18,385.

The Pannadi are nonvegetarian, but do not eat beef or pork. Their staple food is rice. They also consume millets and *ragi*. They eat all varieties of pulses, vegetables, roots and tubers. They use groundnut and gingelly oils for cooking. They eat fruit occasionally. Some of their men habituatally take alco-

holic drinks. They drink tea and coffee. Some of them chew tobacco and betel. Most of them smoke *beedis* and cigarettes. They also use snuff.

Social divisions exist at the subcaste level among the Pannadi. The main subdivisions are the Kadaiyan, Konga, Pandyan and Sozhia. These subdivisions used to be endogamous and showed distinct social hierarchy. Nowadays, marital alliances are permitted between these endogamous groups. The Pannadi are aware of the Hindu *varna* system and consider themselves Sudras in it.

They live mostly in nuclear families, but there are some extended families. An avoidance relationship is observed between mother-in-law and son-in-law, daughter-in-law and father-in-law, sister-in-law and elder brother-in-law. A joking relationship is observed between sisters-in-law and brothers-in-law. They follow the male equigeniture rule of inheritance. The eldest son succeeds as the head of the family.

Pannadi women participate in agricultural operations, animal husbandry and other economic activities. They take part in social functions and religious rituals.

The Pannadi practise endogamy at the community level. Consanguineous marriages are preferred, such as to father's sister's daughter or mother's brother's daughter. Marriage between maternal uncle and niece is also permitted. Sororate unions are permitted. The age at marriage is 20-24 years and 18-22 years for boys and girls, respectively. The mode of acquiring a mate is by negotiation. Monogamy is the norm. The *thali* is the symbol of marriage. In the past, Rs.15 was given to the bride's parents by the bridegroom's parents as bride-price. But, nowadays, dowry in cash and kind also is demanded. The rule of residence is patrilocal. Divorce is permitted, with social or judicial approval, on grounds of adultery and maladjustment. Divorce compensation is given to the wife. Either spouse can initiate divorce. Children are the responsibility of either parent, as decided by the caste panchayat or the court. Widows, widowers and divorcees can remarry.

The Pannadi observe the pre-delivery ritual *valaikappu* in the fifth or seventh month of a woman's first pregnancy. The mother of the pregnant woman brings her sweets. Close relatives

present her bangles, ornaments and saris. A feast is served the relatives. After the *valaikappu,* she is taken to her natal home for the delivery. They observe birth pollution for about 28 days. The naming ceremony is celebrated after the third month. They celebrate the first rice-feeding ceremony in the sixth month. At that time, they perform tonsuring and ear-boring ceremonies.

When a Pannadi girl attains puberty, she is bathed, dressed in clothes brought by the washerman, and presented with flowers and fruits by her relatives. She is secluded in a hut constructed with coconut leaves and wild sugarcane. Her diet includes jaggery, milk and plantains. On the seventh day, she is given a purificatory bath and presented with fresh clothes. The hut is then burnt down and, for three days, she occupies a corner of the verandah of her home. On the 11th day, she is once again purified with a ceremonial bath, presented with new clothes by her relations and permitted to enter the house. This puberty rite is known as *puchuta.*

Pannadi elders negotiate marriage alliances. The betrothal takes place at the bride's residence. After the betrothal, both families go to a nearby temple and exchange flowers and salt, thus confirming the marriage alliance. A *kanganam* (yellow thread) is tied on the wrist of the bridegroom by the barber, who, after the marriage, removes it. The bridegroom proceeds to the house of the bride in procession, taking with him a cloth, a garland of flowers and the *thali*. The milk-post of the *pandal* is made of milk-hedge (*Euphoriba tirunealli*). During the wedding, the bridegroom ties a wrist-thread on the bride's wrist. In front of them are placed an idol of Pillaiyar (Ganesha) made of cowdung, two plantains, seven coconuts, a measure of paddy, a stalk of *Andropogon sorghum* with a betel leaf stuck on it and seven sets of betel leaves and arecanuts. Camphor is burnt, and two coconuts are broken and placed before the Pillaiyar. The *thali* is blessed by the elders. The *oor pannadi* (head of the village) hands over the *thali* to the bridegroom, who ties it around the bride's neck. The couple then exchange garlands and go to the temple of Makalimman.

The Pannadi dead are cremated. The body is bathed and placed in a *pandal* made with four plantain trees and four

green leafy branches. Close relatives cover the body with a new cloth and it is taken to the burial ground, where the relatives put rice and water in the mouth of the corpse. It is then laid in the grave which is then filled with soil. The sons of the deceased are tonsured. They observe death pollution for nine or eleven days. On the 9th or 11th day after death, they observe *karumandiram* (last rites) for the dead. In case of the father's death, the youngest son performs the death rituals, while in the case of the mother, it is the eldest son. They observe ancestor worship.

Land is the main natural resource of the Pannadi. In the past, it was controlled by other affluent communities, such as the Brahman, Gounder and Vellalar. The Pannadi worked as agricultural labourers, to earn their livelihood. Nowadays, in addition to their traditional occupation as small farmers and agricultural labourers, some are in government as well as private service. A few of them have started small business ventures. They have direct links with the market and the form of exchange is in cash. The incidence of agricultural and industrial labourers among them is increasing.

The traditional caste council or panchayat exists and is headed by the *pattakaran* who is the head of the community. The *pattakaran* resolves cases such as adultery, rape, elopment, theft, disrespect to traditional norms and disputes over land and water. The young of the community have lost confidence in these hereditary posts and have formed village councils. Election to the village council is by voice vote, for three years. The role of the village council is to plan and implement welfare and development measures. The usual forms of punishment are social boycott or excommunication and cash fines, depending on the nature of the crime.

The Pannadi are Hindus. Makaliamman is their village deity. Other deities they worship are Mariamman, Bhadrakali, Muthumariamman, Thandumariamman and Veerakaliamman. They also worship all other Hindu deities. They celebrate the festival of Makaliamman for 14 days every March-April. The *pattakaran* and priest of the temple take leading parts in this festival. They dance, holding firepots, in front of the temple, while others beat the drums. Their sacred specialists are from

their own community and perform birth, marriage and death rites. The folk-songs are sung by men alone. Men also participate in group dances.

The Pannadi accept food and water from other communities, such as the Vellalar, the Brahman, the Gounder and the Chettiar. They share wells and water sources with other communities. Some of the Pannadi are in administrative jobs and a few are in the defence services. There are also a few engineers and doctors among them.

The Pannadi favour formal education for their children. Boys and girls generally study upto the primary level. Some of the boys complete graduation and a few have acquired postgraduate degrees. Most boys give up their studies due to poverty. They use modern medicare. They favour family planning. They have access to all civic amenities and government programmes.

N.C. SARKAR

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PANNIANDI

The Panniandi are so known because of their occupation *i.e.* rearing pigs. In Tamil *panni* means 'pig'. Almost all families in the community rear pigs. The Panniandi are a Scheduled Caste community. The community has four clans, the Kundrol, Arivilol, Vaital and Sarapol, the first two and last two are brotherly clans, of the moiety division. Marriage alliances between brotherly clans are taboo. Therefore, a person from the Kundrol clan cannot marry a girl from the Arvilol clan but can marry a girl either from the Vaital or Sarapol subgroups. The Panniandi are a Telugu-speaking community, who migrated from Andhra to Tamil Nadu. The converse in Tamil with outsiders and use the Tamil script. They are inhabitants of almost all municipal areas in the Periyar and Coimbatore Districts. They are also found in Rajapalayam in the Kamarajar District. Their total population is 2695 (1981 Census).

The staple food of the Panniandi community is rice. They also consume *ragi* and millets. The Panniandi are nonvegetarian, who eat pork. They consume pulses, vegetables, roots and tubers. They use groundnut oil for cooking. The men drink *sarayam* (arrack) and *kallu* (toddy). Both men and women drink tea and coffee. They consume milk and milk products occasionally. Both men and women chew betel leaf, nuts and tobacco. Some men smoke *beedis* and cigarettes and use snuff.

There is no hierarchical order and inequality among the Panniandi clans. Because of their pig-rearing and scavenging, they have been given a low rank in the regional social hierarchy.

The Panniandi are an endogamous group. They strictly observe the rule of endogamy at the community level and exogamy at clan level. They follow the *menarikam* custom of marriage, which is prevalent among Telugu-speaking communities of the area. They marry their elder sister's daughter (uncle-niece marriage) or maternal uncle's daughter or paternal aunt's daughter. In the past, polygamy, both sororal and non-sororal, was the norm. But now monogamy is the norm. Girls are married within a year of their attaining puberty.

Marital alliances are negotiated by the elders. The *thali* is the symbol of marriage. The custom of bride-price exists among the Panniandi and is negotiated by the elders.

Most Panniandi live in nuclear families. Joint families are rare. Among household members, joking relations are permitted between certain consanguineal and affinal relatives. An avoidance relationship exists between mother-in-law and sons-in-law and daughters-in-law and father-in-law. All the sons get equal shares of the ancestral property. Daughters inherit when there are no sons. The eldest son succeeds as the head of the family after his father's death.

Panniandi women have a secondary status compared to their men. They don't have any rights over their ancestral property. They take care of their pigs. They work as scavengers in municipal areas in groups and, thus, contribute to the family income. They participate in all social, religious and ritual activities along with their menfolk.

The Panniandi observe the pre-delivery ritual *valaikappu* either in the seventh or ninth month of a woman's first pregnancy. On that day the pregnant woman is fed with seven or nine varieties of food preparations, depending on the month. Glass bangles are put on her wrists and new clothes are presented to her by her mother. After the *valaikappu* ceremony, she is taken to her natal house where the childbirth takes place. Six days of post-delivery pollution is observed. On the seventh day after birth, a ritual bath is given to both the child and the mother after which new clothes are given to the child. On the same day, they observe the naming ceremony. Tonsuring, for both boys and girls, is observed in a temple after three years. Ear-boring is also done on the same day by a goldsmith, who is paid in cash. Usually, the maternal uncle of the child meets all the expenditure of this ceremony.

The Panniandi observe puberty rites for a girl when she attains menarche. They construct a temporary hut in front of the house, and the girl is kept in seclusion in it for six days. After performing the *seeru* on the 7th day, she is allowed to attend her domestic work. On the day of *seeru*, a purificatory bath is given to her by her sister-in-law or aunt. The maternal uncle gifts her new clothes.

Before finalisation of the date of marriage, the horoscopes of the boy and girl are matched. If they match, the date of the marriage is finalised. The wedding is usually held in the morning, either at the bride's house or at the bridegroom's house. A Brahman priest officiates at the wedding. The marriage is solemnised in front of the sacred fire, with the bridegroom tying the *thali* around the neck of the bride. The couple then exchange floral garlands. A nonvegetarian feast is arranged by both families. The consummation ceremony takes place at the bridegroom's house.

The Panniandi bury their dead. Upon the arrival of close relatives, the body is bathed and wrapped in new cloth. It is then carried to the burial ground on a bamboo bier. The eldest son is the chief mourner. The headman of the community (*pattakarar*) leads the funeral procession. They place the corpse in the grave in a prone position, laying its head towards the south.

The Panniandi observe death pollution for three days. On the third day after death, they observe the *pedda karma* or *kariyam* ritual. On that day, the deceased person's family members and relatives visit the burial ground with milk and perform various rituals. The barber shaves the heads of the sons of the deceased. They then have oilbaths and pour milk over the grave. A feast is offered to close relatives. They observe the death anniversary and worship their ancestors.

The traditional occupations of the Panniandi are running piggeries and scavenging. Most of them still follow these traditional occupations. The major economic resources of the Panniandi are their piggeries and municipal work. Women and children also help in pig-rearing. They sell the pigs in the nearby markets. The mode of exchange is cash.

The Panniandi have a traditional headman who is known as *pattakarar*. It is an honorary, hereditary post. The *pattakarar* is responsible for maintaining peace and harmony in the community. He settles disputes and cases of theft, adultery and divorce in the community. Punishment or imposing fines is based on the nature of case. The *pattakarar* has considerable influence over the Panniandi community. The Panniandi have formed an association, jointly with the Kattunayakkar, known

as the Tamil Nadu Kattunayakkan Samugha Sirtirutha Sangham, which takes care of their community interests and plans and implements welfare and development measures.

The Panniandi are Hindus. Makaliamman is their community goddess, while Karupurayan is their community god. A priest from the community is in charge of conducting the puja once a week, on Fridays, in their temples. The *dharmakartha* of the village temple is also from the Panniandi community; he looks after the business of the temple and is responsible for celebrating the annual festival of the deity in the Tamil month of *Avani*. The post of temple priest is also hereditary. They also worship all other Hindu deities, including Siva, Murugan, Ganapathi, Rama, Krishna and Lakshmi. They visit all Hindu temples and go on pilgrimage to all Hindu sacred centres. They celebrate Pongal, Deepavali and other Hindu festivals. They also observe Tamil and Telugu New Year's Days.

The Panniandi accept both cooked and uncooked food and water from other neighbouring communities, such as the Vellalar, the Brahman, the Naidu, the Mudaliar and the Devanga. These communities, however, do not accept any kind of food or water from the Panniandi. The Panniandi share water sources, temples and public places with other communities. The community does not have professionals or political leaders.

The Panniandi favour formal education for their children. Boys study upto the secondary school level, but no graduate or professional has emerged from the community. Boys and girls drop out from school because of poverty. They live in unhygienic surroundings, as they keep their pigs in their backyards in a highly unsanitary environment. They do not favour family planning. They have access to civic amenities.

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PARAVAN

The Paravan are an important fishing community. They are distributed in the Tirunelveli, Chidambaranar, Ramanathapuram and Kanniyakumari Districts. There is another caste named Chunnambu Paravan who are lime burners and they should not be mistaken for the fishermen community (Nambiar, 1966). Paradavan, Bharathar, Meenavan, Meenparavan are synonyms of the Paravan. Some of them who are in the fish business or in other businesses call themselves Mesakkaran or Cavalakkaran. The Cavalakkaran are those who procure fish from the fishermen and sell them in nearby places. There is a social relationship between the Paravan and Cavalakkara Paravan (Chokkalingam, 1971). Though the 1901 Census figure for the population of the Paravan was only 5242 (Francis, 1901), the estimated population of the Paravan was around 30,000 (Pate, 1917). Generally, in multicaste villages, their settlements are situated at a distance from the main village to facilitate the drying of nets and fish.

The Paravan claim to be Kshatriyas of the Pandya dynasty. Some claim that they were employed in the fleets of the Pandya kings. According to another account, they are the descendants of the King Bharata of the Lunar race (Pate, 1917). The Paravan, experts in pearl-fishing, had come in conflict with the Muslims over the pearl fisheries in the Palk Bay. So, in 1529, the Paravan, Mukkuvan and the other fishing and pearl-fishing communities sent a delegation to Cochin to meet Michael Vaz, the Vicar-General of Goa, seeking help against the Muslims. Michael Vaz sailed with the Paravan and promised aid to them on condition that the Paravan and other fisher communities adopted Christianity if they succeeded in defeating the Muslims. When the Muslims were defeated, the Paravan and the Mukkuvan adopted Christianity. Thus, in 1532, "the Christianity of the fishery coast" was established (Pate, 1917). Later, through the work of Francis Xavier, the whole community was converted to Christianity and to this day one can find a church in many Paravan villages dedicated to Francis Xavier. The Paravan who came in contact with the Portugese adopted family names such as Fernando, Rayan and Pereira.

The mother tongue of the Paravan is Tamil. They have a flag of their own; it is red in colour and bears the symbol of a fish, a bow and an arrow. The flag is hoisted in important places in the village or habitation. Apart from this, there is no special identification marker of the community.

The Paravan are nonvegetarian, but do not eat beef or pork. Their staple foods are rice and fish. They also eat millets, *kambu* and *cholam*. They mainly use groundnut oil and gingelly oil for cooking. They consume all the locally available vegetables and pulses. The men take alcoholic drinks. Many of them smoke and some have the habit of chewing betel leaf, with or without tobacco. Some use snuff. They drink coffee and tea.

The Paravan do not have further subgroupings. But the persons who have given up fishing and are engaged in some other occupation feel superior to the persons who are still fishermen. Marriages are arranged by parents. Generally, boys are married at the age of 21-25 years and girls at 16-21. The *thali* is the marriage symbol. Their marriages are conducted in the church and the church priest officiates at the marriage. They give dowry in kind and cash. Divorce is not permitted. Widows can remarry. After marriage, the rule of residence is patrilocal. Both joint and nuclear families are common. The women take care of all family affairs, as the men are away fishing. Women also sell the catch. They have a joking relationship with their brothers-in-law and sisters-in-law. Property is divided among the sons only.

Pre-delivery rituals are observed by the Paravan, but they are not elaborate. The pregnant woman is offered glass bangles to wear during the seventh or ninth month of her pregnancy and is blessed by the elderly married women of the community. Then she is taken to her natal house. Birth pollution is observed for eight days and on the eighth day the mother and the child are taken to the church. The child is named in the church on the eighth day with a special prayer and the priest announces the name. The child is baptised within thirty days of birth. The first hair-removing ceremony is arranged in the church of Saint Antony or Saint Xavier. When the child's head is shaved, the hair is removed in such a way that some hair is left in a round shape on the crown.

A Paravan girl, on attaining puberty, is ritually bathed either on the same day or on the third day. Her maternal uncle and paternal aunt are informed. Though pollution is not observed at home, she does not visit the church for 16 days. On the 16th day, her paternal aunt gives her a sari, wearing which she goes to the church. They arrange for a special prayer in the church on this occasion. Her maternal uncle also gifts her a sari.

The Paravan prefer to marry a father's sister's daughter or a mother's brother's daughter. They used to marry their sister's daughter also, but the church does not generally allow uncle-niece marriages. The bridegroom's parents initiate the marriage proposal. Dowry is demanded in the form of gold ornaments and cash. When both the boy's and the girl's parents agree on the marriage, they arrange for the *nichayathartham* and a ring is presented to the bride on that day. Then the banns are read in the church to see if there is any objection to the marriage.

In the event of a death, it is announced to all by the tolling of the church bell. The Paravan bathe the body and cover it with a white shroud, before placing it in a wooden coffin. The priest of the church leads the death procession and a special prayer is offered at the burial ground. They have a cart to carry the dead body. Death by suicide is considered a sin and so the church bells are not rung, prayers are not offered and the body cannot be buried in the church yard.

The primary occupation of the Paravan is fishing. Some of them have their own boats, but most of them work as labourers in the fishing boats. Generally one-fourth of the catch is distributed among the labourers as their wages. They are engaged in pearl-fishing as well, but pearl-fishing is done only once every five years or so. Hence, it forms only a secondary occupation.

The Paravan have their own caste panchayat to control their society. The church does not interfere in the caste panchayat's activities. Formerly the Paravan were Hindus, but now the entire community are Roman Catholics. Their relation with other castes of the area are cordial. Their most important festivals are New Year's Day, Christmas, Palm Sunday, All Soul's

Day and Ash Wednesday. They are active in local politics and have been elected as members of the gram panchayat and municipalities.

The Paravan now give importance to their children's education. They visit hospitals for medical treatment. There are primary health centres in their villages. They avail bank loans and government subsidies to purchase nylon nets and for the mechanisation of their boats. They have been given houses, built free of cost, by the State government in some regions.

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PARAYAN

The Parayan till two decades ago were referred to as, and called, Parayan. But this term was replaced by the term 'Harijan', suggested by Mahatma Gandhi for all untouchable castes. All over Tamil Nadu, the habitat of this community is a little away from the main village. The word 'Parayan' is said to be derived from *parai*, a drum. Iyer (1912), says that "Parayans delight in drum beating and are generally called on to act as drummers at funerals, marriages and village festivals of Tamil Sudras". Thurston (1909) stated that at the Census 1891, 348 subdivisions were returned. But the present day informants deny this and say there could never be so many divisions or subgroups among them at any stage. They say that they do not have any subgroups among them. Some who dig graves or attend to funeral rites in the cremation ground are called Vettiyan, some who blow a kind of pipe called *tharai* during the funeral procession are called Panisaivan. But there is no restriction on intermarriage among these groups. They are natives of the State and are spread all over the State. They are not aware of any legend or myth about their origin. The total population was 8,24,337 according to the 1981 Census. They speak Tamil and use the Tamil script. The Parayan are a Scheduled Caste community.

The Parayan are nonvegetarian, who eat beef and pork. Their staple foods are millets, *ragi* and rice, supplemented by wheat in recent times. They consume all locally available pulses, roots, tubers and vegetables. Groundnut oil is used for cooking. Fruits, milk, and milk products, coffee and tea are consumed by them when they can afford them. The men take alcoholic drinks, the women do not. Informants say that some men spend a major part of their income on alcoholic drinks. Men smoke *beedis* and cigarettes. Both men and women chew betel with nuts, lime and tobacco. Some of the men and women use snuff.

There are no social divisions among the Parayan. They are aware of their low rank in the regional social hierarchy. Their elders still remember the past when they were humiliated.

They could not wear clean clothes; they were not allowed to wear the lungi below the knees, they could not walk on the main streets in the village where the high castes lived; they were not allowed to wear footwear or hold an umbrella. They said that part of their population migrated to Andhra, Karnataka, Kerala and Ceylon (Sri Lanka). Nowadays, they say their living conditions have improved much and they do not suffer all those humiliations of the past.

The Parayan live in both nuclear and joint families. They have no avoidance or joking relationships among family members. The residence after marriages is patrilocal. All the sons share the parental properties, equally. The eldest son in the family succeeds his father as the head of the family.

Most Parayan women work as agricultural labourers. Of late, a few educated women in urban areas work in offices and factories and contribute to the family income. They participate in the community's social and religious functions. Women do not have any decision-making powers. In rural areas, girls are not sent to school after they attain puberty. But when they are 18 years old, whether they are already married or not, they are sent out to work as agricultural labour.

The Parayan have no pre-delivery ritual. The first delivery of a pregnant woman is in her natal home. The mother and child are said to be polluted for eight days. On the ninth day, the village barber's wife gives a ritual bath to the mother and child to end the pollution. During the third month, their priest is called to name the child. Tonsuring and ear-piercing are done for both male and female children before they are five years old.

When a Parayan girl attains puberty, her maternal uncle's family is informed of it first. He erects an enclosure within the house with plaited green coconut leaves. The girl is given a bath, made to wear a sari and sit inside the enclosure. For eight days she is given gingelly oil with an egg early in the morning. During the day, she is given a special diet of *puttu*, *idli*, *dosa* and *vada* brought by close kin, besides the usual food. On the ninth day, she is bathed by all the married women present at the ceremony and given a new sari to wear. All who are present for this ritual are then served a special meal.

The Parayan allow a man to marry his sister's daughter or his father's sister's daughter or his mother's brother's daughter. A widower may marry his wife's younger sister. Parayan girls used to be always married soon after attaining puberty. Now girls marry after they are 18 years old and boys after 25. The boy's family used to take the initiative in the past in arranging a marriage, but nowadays marriages by elopement and also marriages in which the girl's family takes the initiative are on the increase. Monogamy is the norm. The *thali* and toe-rings are the symbols of marriage. On the *nichayathartham* (betrothal) day, the bridegroom's family brings a set of new clothes for the bride, cosmetic items, flowers, betelnuts, betel leaves and at least one full bunch of bananas for distribution among the Parayan families in the habitat. The bride's family arranges for some pots of toddy, and it is compulsory for bridegroom's party to organise twice that quantity of toddy. The bride's and bridegroom's fathers formally agree to the alliance. Keeping a small pot (*mondhai*) of toddy in their hands they pronounce the marriage agreement and exchange the *mondhai* with each other. This is called *mondhai kalakkal* and is an important ritual. But, this custom has been replaced by the exchange of plates containing betel-leaves, marriage saree, flowers and arecanuts as toddy is not available now. Thereafter, all the men enjoy the toddy. The food is served by the bride's family.

Divorce is permitted in the Parayan community, on grounds of adultery, barrenness, cruelty and insanity. Their community panchayat deals with the case and formally approves the divorce. Compensation is paid to the aggrieved party, whether it is the husband or the wife. If the children are very young, they stay with the mother. In cases where the children are adolescents and the husband is a drunkard or is irresponsible, then too the children stay with the mother. Widow remarriage is permitted. A divorced woman also can remarry.

The date for a Parayan marriage is fixed by the Valluva Pandaram priest. The bride's party reaches the temple in the bridegroom's village in a bullock cart. The bridegroom's family receives them, offers them coffee or some soft drink and betelnuts and betel leaves. They are then led to the venue of

the wedding and given food. The next morning, they cook rice, make big balls of it and keep them in the place where the marriage is to be celebrated. These are offerings to the deities. These rice balls are then given to their barber, washerman, their two *nattamaikarar* (panchayat heads) and the *varian* (the messenger). The *thali*-tying is the most important ritual in the marriage. After that, all the elders pour two handfuls of rice each on a mat in front of the new couple. Rice for this is provided by the bridegroom's family. The rice collected on the mat is shared by the service communities of the Parayan. Then the couple sow the *navdhanya* (nine cereals) in a spot near the well in the house. By evening, the bride's party start for their village along with the bride and bridegroom. The consummation ceremony is at the bride's residence. They stay there for five to seven days, then return to bridegroom's home with traditional gifts such as vessels, sweets and fruits.

The Parayan either cremate or bury their dead. They have a separate burial ground. Their funeral rites are very simple. The body is carried on a bier constructed with bamboo wood and palmleaf mats. Some engage men to dance before the body all the way to the place of cremation. All male relatives attending the funeral are offered toddy. On the day of cremation, only the chief mourners — the sons of the deceased — have their heads shaved. But on the 16th day, when they do *kariyam* (final death rites for the dead), all the agnatic kin present have to get their heads shaved. For 15 days, from the day of death, they observe pollution. They go to the cremation place the next day, collect the bones in a new pot and dispose of them in a nearby river or stream. On the fifth day after the death, the *pal sadangu*, or milk ceremony, takes place. On the 16th day, their Valluva Pandaram priest conducts the *kariyam* and the pollution ends. The *thali*-removing ritual is observed by the deceased's widow on the 15th night. On the 17th day, they cook nonvegetarian food and serve it to the relatives who attended the *kariyam*. They worship their ancestors at least once a year during festive or ceremonial occasions.

Land is the main economic resource of the Parayan. Traditionally they were agricultural labourers. Now a few of them

own little land. But, almost all Parayan families earn their livelihood through agricultural labour in rural areas. In the past, due to their incapacity to return the loans they had taken from their masters, they and their family members were forced to serve the same landlord, accepting whatever wages that he would give them. Of late, the attitude of the landlords towards these labourers has changed considerably for the better.

The Parayan have started to realise the value of formal education for their children. The educated individuals among them have taken up white-collar jobs in government and private service. As the schools in the rural areas give free education and also free meals to children attending school, many Parayan families send their children to school instead of sending them to work as labourers. In rural areas they receive payment in cash as well as in kind.

Cases of disputes between individuals or groups, leading to violence, cases of extramarital relations within the Parayan community or with outsiders, and petty thefts come up occasionally. They have two *nattamaikarar* (leaders) for each settlement. They also have a *varian,* whose duty is to announce when a panchayat meeting is being summoned or communicate any information to the members in the community. On the day of the panchayat meeting, elder male members in the community join the *nattamaikarar*, and in the presence of all the assembled men, the person accused is asked to explain. The *nattamaikarar* try to settle the differences and levy a fine on the offender. In the case of divorce or separation, the spouse asking for the divorce is made to pay some money to the other. Nowadays people approach the police and court also.

The Parayan are Hindus. Their family deities are Ellamman, Mulliamman and Ettiamman. They regularly worship these deities and occasionally sacrifice chicken or goats as offerings to them. Their village goddess is Mariamman. A Valluva Pandaram officiates as a priest in their Mariamman temple. He is their sacred specialist and performs birth, marriage and death rites. They also worship the regional deity, Murugan, and deities of the wider pantheon, such as Tirupati Venkatesa Perumal. Pongal, being an agricultural harvest festival, is the most important festival for the Parayan. Deepavali and Karthigai

are also celebrated by them. There are a few Parayan converted to Christianity.

The Parayan have their own priest, barber and washerman. The community has economic relationships with the peasant communities. In rural areas, these traditional links are obligatory and keep the various communities close and united.

Other communities do not accept cooked food and water from the Parayan. But the Parayan accept water and cooked food from the other communities. In rural areas they have their own water sources and cremation grounds. The Parayan also visit the temples which the other communities visit. They participate in the traditional festivals. There are scholars, white-collar job-holders, teachers, administrators, engineers and doctors among them, though their number may be insignificant. There are political leaders from this community at the State level.

The Parayan favour sending their boys and girls to schools and colleges. They favour both modern and traditional medicare. They have access to the health and family welfare programmes. Most couples prefer three children. They have access to all civic amenities.

RAJALAKSHMI MISRA

Veppur Parayan

The Veppur Parayan are the Parayan from the Veppur region of Tiruchchirappalli District. The Parayan are referred to in Tamil literature and inscriptions. An inscription of the Chola king Raja Raja Chola of 11th Century mentions them and their two main divisions, *viz.* Nesavu or weaver and Ulavu or ploughmen (Thurston, 1909). The Parayan were the agricultural labourers for the Vellalar community, either as *padiyal* (hereditarily attached to a family) or *kuliyal* (daily wage agricultural labourer).

The Parayan claim to be the descendants of the Brahman priest, Sala Sambavan, who was employed in a Siva temple to worship the deity with offerings of beef. He incurred the anger

of the deity for concealing a portion of the meat (Thurston, 1909). The Parayan consider the Brahman as their cousin. They were originally a respected caste and their degradation started only after the colonisation by the Vellalar in the 8th Century A.D. Their lands were taken by the Vellalar (Thurston,1909).

The Veppur Parayan were listed as a denotified caste in the past. They are now a Scheduled Caste accroding to the reference given in G.O.No.1564, 30 July 1985. In the *varna* order, the Veppur Parayan are Sudras. In the social hierarchy, they are ranked equal to the Parayan communities. The mother tongue of the Veppur Parayan is Tamil.

The Veppur Parayan say that they were originally the soldiers of Raja Desing of Gingee fort and used the title Nayak. After the fall of Gingee, they became dacoits and indulged in many criminal activities. A special police outpost was set up by the British in Veppur to control their activities. Between 1906 and 1908, there were encounters between the Veppur Parayan and the police force. The Veppur Parayan could not be easily controlled as they used to hide in the dense forests of the region. In 1910, many of them were captured and put in a prisoners' settlement. In 1911, they were separated into three different camps, *viz.* 1) the Otteri settlement in Madras, 2) the Pammal settlement near Pallavaram in Madras, and 3) the Azeez settlement near Neyveli. The Azeez settlement was started with 126 families by the District Collector of South Arcot, whose name was Azeez. When the area came under the Neyveli coal mines authority, they were rehabilitated in Idaikkal, near Ulundurpet in South Arcot District.

The Veppur Parayan are nonvegetarians, but do not eat beef. Their staple foods are rice, millet and *ragi*. They consume all kinds of locally available pulses, vegetables and roots. They use groundnut oil and gingelly oil for cooking. The men and women drink liquor occasionally. They drink coffee and tea, without milk. Many of them smoke *beedis* or cigarettes and some chew betel leaf with or without tobacco.

The Veppur Parayan are an endogamous group. Of late, they have had marital alliances with the Parayan of other areas.

Monogamy is the norm among the Veppur Parayan. They

prefer cross-cousin and uncle-niece alliances. Marriages are negotiated by parents. Boys get married at the age of 21-25 and girls at 16-20. The *thali* is the marriage symbol. The wedding is celebrated in the bridegroom's house. A Valluvar Pandaram officiates at the marriage. They pay neither bride-price nor dowry.

Veppur Parayan women are consulted in all family activities. The girls are sent to school upto the secondary level nowadays. Women work as agricultural and casual labourers.

During the ninth month of a Veppur Parayan woman's pregnancy, her parents visit her and give her different rice dishes and *sool kappu* (bangles). Then she is taken to her natal home for the delivery. The newborn child is given sugar water by all the elderly women who are not widows. Pollution is observed for 11 days. On the 11th day, the child's paternal grandmother ties a turmeric-stained thread around the child's waist. On the same day, the child is named. The relatives give gifts to the child and the child's grandparents give it new clothes. The tonsuring ceremony is arranged in the family deity's temple within a year. On that day, rice is cooked at the temple premises and the deity is worshipped. In the past, animals were sacrificed on this occasion at the temple, but this is no longer the practice. The ear-boring ceremony is celebrated when the girl child is five. The family distributes a mixture of rice, green gram and jaggery to those who attend the function. Then the child's ears are pierced by a goldsmith and silver or gold earrings are put on. The relatives are served a feast.

On attaining puberty, the Veppur Parayan girl is bathed, and isolated in a separate hut for 16 days. The maternal uncle brings sweets, banana, fruits and betel leaves and distributes them to the relatives on that day. The puberty ceremony, *manjal neerattu vizha*, is celebrated either on the 16th day or on any other auspicious day. The maternal uncle presents the girl a sari. The elders bless her. Relatives present gifts to the girl. Girls are generally confined to their homes after they attain puberty.

The boy's parents initiate the marriage proposal and approach the girl's parents, some Veppur Parayan consult an

astrologer with the horoscopes of the boy and the girl. The betrothal ceremony is held in the girl's house. The boy's parents bring sweets, coconut, banana fruits and betel leaves for the hosts. The betrothal is held in the presence of the head of their caste panchayat and an auspicious day is fixed for the marriage. The plate containing the betrothal sari and cash of Rs.21-101 is handed over to the girl's father by the boy's father. The girl then wears the betrothal sari and the elders bless her. The girl's father gives a feast. The *thali* and the marriage sari are presented by the bridegroom's father. The wedding is at the bridegroom's house. The main ritual is the tying of the *thali*. The couple then exchange garlands three times. The elders bless them by applying *thiruneer* (sacred ash) on their foreheads. The relatives are given a feast. The couple visit the bride's house on the same day and the consummation ceremony takes place there that night. The girl's father arranges a nonvegetarian feast.

Divorce is allowed and is granted by the caste panchayat. Either spouse may seek divorce, but no compensation is paid. The children live with their father. Widower, widow and divorcee remarriages are permitted. Widowers and widows can marry their deceased spouse's younger sister or brother respectively.

When a death occurs among the Veppur Parayan, an oil lamp is lit and placed by the head of the dead person, and a coconut is broken. A 25-paise coin is kept on the forehead of the deceased. They bring water and a white cloth from the house of a brother of the deceased to bathe the body and to cover it. They make the bier and dig the grave in the burial ground themselves. The dead are buried with the head kept towards the south. The eldest son performs the *kolli* (last rites) at the burial ground for the mother and the youngest son performs it for the father. If the deceased does not have a son, *kolli* is performed by the eldest and youngest daughters for the mother and father respectively, but the death rites are performed in front of the house and not at the burial ground. The Parayan beat the drums. The barber blows the conch shell in the death procession. On the second day the family go to the burial ground to offer milk to the dead. On the 16th day, they observe *karumathi* or *eemachadangu* and on that day the

Pandaram performs a puja either on the bank of a river or on a tank bund. The in-laws present new clothes to the sons of the deceased. On the 17th day, a non-vegetarian feast is served. In case the husband dies, the *thali* of the widow is removed on the 16th night by another widow. The widow wears a plain colored sari from that day onwards.

The Veppur Parayan, after their rehabilitation in different settlements, have taken up agriculture, agricultural labour and other manual labour as their occupations. Both women and men work. A police outpost is maintained even now in each of their settlements. They got land and other facilities from the Government for their settlement.

The Veppur Parayan have their traditional caste council, the head of which is elected by voice vote. All disputes, including theft, divorce, quarrels and elopement, are settled in the caste panchayat. Cash fines are collected from the guilty. They have to obey the decision of the head of the caste.

The Veppur Parayan are Hindus. They worship family deities, *viz.* Vellaiyammal, Madurai Veeran, Nalla Thangal, Manchaiyappar and Ayyanar and regional deities such as Mariyammal and Kaliyammal. Their important festivals are Pongal, Deepavali and Karthigai. They worship Ayyanar on the day of Thaippusam and worship Mariyammal in the Tamil month of *Cittirai*.

The relations of the Veppur Parayan with the other Parayan as well as other castes of the area are cordial. They have a separate barber and washerman, who also serve the other Parayan. They use the services of the Valluvar Pandaram priest during marriage and death ceremonies. The local Parayan acts as their drummers. They have a separate well and a separate burial ground.

The Veppur Parayan have primary schools in their settlements. They now send their sons and daughters to the schools. The children get scholarships for higher studies. The community have access to all civic amenities.

S. MANOHARAN

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PARKAVAKULAM

The Parkavakulam are a caste cluster of the Malaiman, Nathaman and Surithaman communities. They use the surnames Udaiyar, Nainar and Moopanar. These three communities are said to be the descendants of the three sons of a Chera king named Deva Raja by his three wives. (Thurston 1909), writes as follows: "Though, in the Census report, 1901, they are shown as a separate caste, they are endogamous subdivisions of Udaiyan. They are the descendants of the three Parayan foster daughters of the poetess Auvaiyar, all of whom became the wives of the king of Tirukkoyilur in South Arcot." But at present, the Malaiman claim that they are separate from the Odaiyan and Nathaman but trace their origin from the King of Tirukkoyilur.

Yet another legend for their origin goes back to Daivika, a king who ruled Tirukkoyilur (in the present South Arcot District. All three subgroups, *viz.* Nathaman, Malaiman and Surithaman claim that they are the descendants of King Daivika, who got married to three girls and gave birth to three children known as Nathamannar, Malaimannar and Suirthamannar. They are mainly concentrated in the Thanjavur, Tiruchchirappalli and South Arcot Districts. They speak Tamil and use the Tamil script. They are nonvegetarian, but in recent years, some have become vegetarian.

The three subcastes of the Parkavakulam are endogamous groups. But in the recent past, intergroup marriages have taken place. Each subgroup has its own exogamous subdivisions called *kanis,* which are generally derived from their ancestral places (Thurston, 1909). The *thali* is the marriage symbol. Widow remarriage and divorce are not allowed, but a widower may remarry. The rule of residence after marriage is patrilocal. They are a patrilineal and patriarchal society. Parental properties are inherited by sons. The men wear the sacred thread like the Brahman.

The Parkavakulam are agriculturalists and agricultural labourers. Some do small business of various kinds, others are in white-collar jobs. They are Hindus. But some of them have

been converted to Christianity. Most Parkavakulam Christians are Roman Catholics. The three different subgroups and the Christians have been studied separately.

Malaiman Udaiyar

The Malaiman Udaiyar community is one of the subgroups of the Parkavakulam community. The meaning of *malaiman* is a 'man of the hills'. The meaning of *udaiyar* is 'one who possesses land'. They are landholders and settled cultivators. They suffix Udaiyar as a title to their names and a few use the title Nainar. The term Nainar is said to be derived from *nayanmar* meaning 'saint'. It is said that one of their ancestors, Meiporul Nayanar, was a saint.

The Malaiman Udaiyar community are identified at the regional level. They are mainly distributed in the Thanjavur, Tiruchchirappalli and South Arcot Districts. Their major concentration is in Thanjavur District. As per the 1921 Census, their total population was 63,385. They speak Tamil and use its script.

The Malaiman Udaiyar were primarily vegetarian, but most of them have become nonvegetarian now. The nonvegetarian do not eat beef or pork. For the rest, their diet is similar to that of the other Udaiyar.

Social divisions exist among the Malaiman Udaiyar at the clan level. Some of the clans are Kulamani, Thandavarayan, Visakadevan and Kaliampuri. The function of the clans is to indicate descent and regulate marriage alliances. The other clans are called *kanis*, but not much is known about them. They concede higher status to the Brahman and claim equal social status with communities such as the Vellalar and the Gounder.

The Malaiman Udaiyar follow endogamy at the community level and exogamy at the clan level. Inter-subgroup marriages are now permitted. Consanguineous marriages are preferred. A boy can marry either his mother's brother's daughter or father's sister's daughter or elder sister's daughter. The marriageable age for boys is 20-25 years and for girls after 18 years. Monogamy is the marital norm. The *thali* and toe-rings

are their marriage symbols. They observe the *kanyadan* (*taraivarthal*) ceremony during their weddings. Dowry is given in both cash and kind. They follow the patrilocal rule of residence. All sons get equal shares in the ancestral property and the eldest son succeeds his father, as head of the family. Divorce and widow remarriage are not permitted. Widowers can remarry. Sororate is permitted.

The Malaiman Udaiyar women's role in family and society is similar to that of other Udaiyar women. However, unlike the others, they do not take part in agricultural activites.

The Malaiman Udaiyar observe *valaikappu*, the pre-delivery ritual, during the seventh or ninth month of a woman's first pregnancy. The mother of the pregnant woman brings her bangles, new clothes, fruits and flowers on an auspicious day. The elders bless her for a safe and easy confinement. Then she is taken to her natal home for the delivery. They observe birth pollution for 16 days. On the 16th day, the mother and child are given ceremonial baths. *Punyadanam*, ceremonial purification, is performed to mark the end of pollution. The naming ceremony is conducted on the thirtieth day. At the end of the first year, the child is tonsured and its ear-lobes pierced.

The Malaiman Udaiyar observe *manjal neerattu vizha*, puberty rites for girls. When a girl attains puberty, she is kept in seclusion for 15 days. On the 16th day, she is given a ceremonial bath and taken into the house to mark the end of pollution. On the same day they conduct a function in which she is given new sari, blouse, comb, mirror, and cosmetics by her maternal uncle. The thread-wearing ceremony is observed for boys at the time of marriage.

Marriages are arranged by Malaiman Udaiyar elders through negotiation. After completing the negotiations, the marriage alliance is confirmed formally (*nichayathartham*) with the exchange of *thamboolam* (betel and arecanut) by both families. The *nichayathartham* is conducted at the bride's residence. The wedding takes place either at the bride's or bride-groom's home. The major rituals conducted during the marriage ceremony are the wearing of the gold *poonool* (sacred thread) by the bridegroom; *kankanamkattu*, tying of wrist threads for the bride and bridegroom; *thalikattu*, or tying of the *thali*

around the neck of bride by the bridegroom; *pattayamkattu*, tying a small gold plate on the forehead of the bride by her sister-in-law; and exchange of garlands by the bride and bridegroom. The couple are blessed by all the elders. A feast is arranged by the bride's parents. Generally a Brahman priest officiates at the marriage. But nowadays the elders of the community officiate. The consummation ceremony is conducted at the bridegroom's home, usually on the same day as the marriage.

The Malaiman Udaiyar dead are cremated. When a death occurs, all relatives are informed immediately. The body is bathed and dressed in new clothes. Then it is carried to the cremation ground. On the day after the funeral, they collect the bones and ashes and dispose of them in water. They do the *paluthelithal* ceremony, pouring of milk, on the cremation spot on this day. They observe death pollution for 16 days. On the 16th day, they perform *karumathi* (last rites) by offering cooked food to the departed soul. *Punyadanam*, ceremonial purification, is performed on this day to mark the end of pollution. The chief mourner is given new clothes by his near relatives on the *karumathi* day. The chief mourner is the eldest son for the mother and the youngest son for the father. They observe annual death rites known as *thivasam* or *varshapyam*. They also observe ancestor worship once in a year.

The natural resource on which the Malaiman Udaiyar depend for their economy is land, which is generally controlled by individual proprietorship. Their traditional occupation is cultivation, which they continue even now. Their secondary occupations are business, government and private service. They maintain links with the market directly as well as through middlemen.

Their caste association, the Parkavakulam Association, works for the general welfare of the community.

The Malaiman Udaiyar are Hindus. They worship the deities of the wider pantheon. They have family, clan, village and regional deities. Some of the deities worshipped by them are Murugan, Maduraiveeran, Mariamman and Draupadiamman. They observe all Hindu festivals, such as Deepavali, Pongal, Dussehra and Sivaratri. They engage sacred specialists from the

Brahman community to perform birth, marriage and death rites.

The Malaiman Udaiyar do not accept cooked food and water from the communities such as the Pallan, Parayan and Chakkiliyan. They exchange food and water with communities such as the Vellalar and Gounder. Intercommunity marriages are only with the other groups of Parkavakulam, *viz.* Nathaman and Surithaman. They share water sources and cremation grounds with other communities. They receive the services of such communities as the Ambattan and the Vannan. They maintain patron-client, landlord-tenant and cultivator-labour relationships. There are businessmen, scholars, white-collar job-holders, teachers, administrators, engineers, advocates and doctors in the community. Political leadership has emerged at state level.

The Malaiman Udaiyar favour formal education for their children. They favour family planning and modern medicare. They have access to all civic amenities.

D. XAVIOUR

Nathaman Udaiyar

The Nathaman Udaiyar are another of the three subgroups of the Parkavakulam community. The meaning of *nathaman* is 'a man of the plains'. Udaiyar is used as a title by them. Under the name Nattamadi, the Nathaman are described in the Thanjavur Manual (Thurston, 1909) as a peasant population. The word is derived from *natham* — 'village' — and are referred to in three forms, Nattamakkal, Nattamar, and Nattamadi.

The Nathaman Udaiyar are mainly distributed in the Thanjavur, South Arcot, Salem, Tiruchchirappalli and Ramanathapuram Districts. Their major concentration is in Thanjavur District. According to the 1921 Census, their population is 1,61,197. They speak Tamil and use its script.

The Nathaman Udaiyar are nonvegetarian, who do not eat beef or pork. Their food habits are similar to those of the other subgroups.

The Nathaman Udaiyar have exogamous units known as *kanis*. The *kanis* are the names of their native villages. Each *kani* is associated with particular deities. Some of the *kanis* are Chithali with the deity Karaimalalagar Ayyanar, Angayanur with the deity Yenadikaruppan, Kulathur with the deity Sundaramurthi Ayyanar and Alliyanagar with Ponnayyanarswamy. The function of the *kanis* is to indicate descent and regulate marriage alliances.

The Nathaman Udaiyar follow endogamy at the community level and exogamy at the *kani* (clan) level. Intersubgroup marriages are permitted at present. Consanguineous marriages are preferred. Girls marry after they are 18, and boys between 20 and 25. Monogamy is the marital norm. If the first wife is barren, a second marriage is allowed for the husband. The marriage symbols are the *thali* and *metti*. A token bride-price is paid. Dowry is given mainly in kind. The *taraivarthal* ceremony (giving away the bride) is observed during marriage rituals. They follow the rule of patrilocal residence. Divorce and widow remarriage are not permitted in the community. Widower remarriage and sororate are permitted.

The family structure and familial relationships are the same among the Nathaman Udaiyar as among other Udaiyar subgroups.

The status of women in the Nathaman Udaiyar community is the same as that among other subgroups. Their women take part in agricultural work.

Most life-cycle rituals are the same among the Nathaman Udaiyar as they are among the other Hindu Udaiyar groups. One function which is exclusive to them is the *kappu karai* observed before the mother and infant child leave for their home from the woman's natal home. In this ceremony, the child is presented gold anklets, wristlets and a chain or necklace.

Marriage alliances are arranged by the Nathaman Udaiyar elders through negotiations. The alliance is formally confirmed by exchange of *thamboolam* (betel leaves and arecanut) by both the parties in the *nichayathartham* ceremony. This ceremony is conducted at the bride's residence. Marriage rituals are conducted at the bridegroom's residence or at a *kalyana*

mandapam. The important marriage rituals are the same as those among other Hindu Udaiyar groups.

The dead, among the Nathaman Udaiyar, are either buried or cremated. The chief mourner is the eldest son for the mother and youngest son for the father. The body is bathed and dressed in new clothes. A puja is performed. Then the body is carried on a bier to the burial ground. On the second day, *palu thelikkarathu,* pouring of milk on the burial or cremation spot, is performed and the bones and ashes are collected and disposed of in water. They observe death pollution for 16 days. On the eighth day, they perform puja, in which fruits and *palaharam* (savouries) are offered to the departed soul. *Karumathi* (last rites) is conducted on the 16th day. Food is offered to the departed soul on the *karumathi* day. Before perfoming the rituals, the chief mourner is given an oilbath. *Punyavachanam,* ceremonial purification, is done on the same day by the priest to mark the end of pollution. *Dhanam* (offerings) are given to the priest. They observe the annual death ritual known as *thivasam.*

The natural resource on which the Nathaman Udaiyar economy depends is land and this is controlled by individual proprietors. Most of them are landholders. Their traditional occupation is agriculture and most of them continue with it even today. Their secondary occupation is business. The poor work as labourers. Some are employed in government service. They maintain links with the market directly as well as through middlemen. Transactions are made in cash.

The traditional caste council exists in the Nathaman Udaiyar community. The members of the council are elders of the community, one from each *kani* (clan). They are elected by voice vote. If any dispute arises in the community they settle the matter. The Parkavakulam Association works for the general welfare of the community.

There are both Saivites and Vaishnavites among the Nathaman Udaiyar. They have family, clan and village deities. Some of the names of the deities are Karaimalalagar and Ayyanar in Chithali village, Chellapillaimar in Angayanur village, Yenadikaruppan in Murugathur village. Sundaramurthi Ayyanar in Kulathur village and Ponnayyanarswamy in Alliyanagar. They

conduct the clan deity temple festival once a year, during the month of *Margazhi* (January). They also observe other Hindu festivals such as Deepavali, Dussehra, Pongal and Sivaratri. Some of them have converted to the Roman Catholic faith.

The Nathaman Udaiyar accept food and water from other communities, except castes such as the Pallan and the Parayan. They exchange food and water with such communities as the Vellalar and the Gounder. They share water sources and cremation grounds with other communities. They receive the services of the Brahman, the Ambattan and the Vannan communities. They maintain patron-client, landlord-tenant and cultivator-labour relationships. The Nathaman Udaiyar have businessmen, scholars, teachers, white-collar job-holders and administrators. Political leadership has emerged from among them at the regional level.

The attitude of the Nathaman Udaiyar is favourable towards formal education. Some students continue studies up to higher levels, but some drop out due to poverty. They favour modern medicare and family planning. They have access to civic amenities and government programmes.

D. XAVIOUR

Surithaman

The Surithaman are one of the three Parkarvakulam subgroups. They are also known as Sudarman. The words 'Surithaman' or 'Sudarman' are supposedly derived from the term *sruthis* meaning 'tunes'. Their ancestors were said to be experts in composing *sruthis.* They are known by their title Moopanar. The term *moopanar* is said to be derived from the word *moopan,* referring to the head of a particular territory. It is also said that the name of the mother of their ancestor was Moopiammai. There are no subgroups within the Surithaman.

The Surithaman are identified at the regional level. They are mainly distributed in the Thanjavur, Tiruchchirappalli and South Arcot Districts. The 1921 Census records their population as 44,194. They speak Tamil and use its script.

The Surithaman are nonvegetarian, but do not eat beef or pork. Their diet is similar to that of the other Parkavakulam groups.

The Surithaman have clans which regulate marriage alliances and indicate descent. Some of the names of the clans are Visakadevan, Thanikapuri, Thandavarayan, Malangam and Vendan. They concede higher status to the Brahman and treat communities such as the Pallan, Parayan, Chakkiliyan, Ambattan and Vannan as inferior to them. They claim equal status with such communities as the Vellalar, Gounder, Nadar, Kallar and Muthuraja.

The Surithaman follow endogamy at the community level and exogamy at the clan level. At present, intercommunity marriages with the other two groups of the Parkavakulam is permitted. Consanguineous marriages are very common in the community. Marriage alliances are arranged by the elders through negotiation. Monogamy is the marital norm. However, a second marriage is permitted, after discussion with the first wife, if she is barren. The *thali* and toe-rings are a woman's marriage symbols. Dowry is given in kind. They follow the patrilocal rule of residence. Divorce and widow remarriages are not permitted in the community. Widower remarriage, and sororate, are permitted.

Family structure and interfamily relationships among the Surithaman are the same as among the other Parkavakulam groups. Similarly, the status of women among the Surithaman is the same as among the other Parkavakulam groups. Life-cycle rituals too among the Surithaman are the same as those followed by the other Parkavakulam groups.

Marriage alliances are arranged by the Surithaman elders through negotiation. After the completion of negotiations, both bride and bridegroom parties meet at bride's residence on an auspicious day and exchange *thamboolam* (betel and arecanuts) to confirm the alliance. Marriage rituals are generally conducted at the bridegroom's residence or, sometimes, at a public place like a *kalyana mandapam*. The major marriage rituals are the same as those for the other Parkavakulam groups.

The Surithaman cremate their dead. If a child dies, it is buried. The eldest son performs funeral rites for the deceased

mother and youngest son for the father. The chief mourner is tonsured on the day of cremation. The funeral rites follow the same pattern as those for the other Parkavakulam groups.

The Surithaman are mainly a landowning community. Their traditional occupation is settled cultivation, which they still continue. Their secondary occupations are business, government and private service. Some of them do labour. They maintain links with the market directly as well as through middlemen.

Traditional caste councils are slowly disappearing and the modern caste association, the Parkavakulam Association, has taken over to work for the general welfare of the Surithaman community.

There are both Saivites and Vaishnavites among the Surithaman. They worship the deities of the wider pantheon order and have family, clan, village and regional deities. Some of their clan deities are Ayyanar, Elaiyaperumal, Karuppaswamy, Papattiamman, Draupadiamman and Ariyathangam. They conduct the temple festival once a year. They also observe other Hindu festivals such as Pongal, Deepavali and Dussehra. Their sacred specialists are from the Brahman community. There are sacred specialists from their own community who perform puja in their temples.

There are artists among the Surithaman. They do painting and modelling with clay and cement. Some of the women in the community do embroidery.

The Surithaman accept food and water from the higher communities. They do not accept water and food from communities such as the Pallan, Parayan and Chakkiliyan. They exchange food and water with the Vellalar, Gounder, Muthuraja, Kallar and Nadar. They share water sources and cremation grounds with other communities. They receive the services of the Ambattan and Vannan communities. They maintain patron-client, landlord-tenant and cultivator-labour relationships.

The Surithaman have businessmen, scholars, white-collar job-holders, teachers, engineers and doctors. Political leadership has emerged at the regional level.

The Surithaman favour formal education for their children. They generally study up to college level. Those who drop out

do so due to poverty. They favour modern medicare and family planning. They have access to civic amenities and government programmes.

D. Xaviour

Udaiyar Christian

The Udaiyar Christian were converted to Christianity from the Nathaman and Malaiman groups of the Parkavakulam, an agricultural community. Udaiyar is their caste title. They are said to have embraced the Roman Catholic faith about a hundred years ago. The community is identified at the regional level. They are found mainly in the Pasumpon Muthuramalingam Thevar, Ramanathapuram, Tiruchchirappalli and Thanjavur Districts. They speak Tamil among themselves and with outsiders, and use the Tamil script.

The Udaiyar Christian are nonvegetarian, who eat pork also. Their staple food is rice and they eat all kinds of pulses, vegetables, roots and tubers, and fruit. Groundnut and gingelly oils are used for cooking. They drink coffee and tea. Men take alcoholic drinks occasionally. They consume milk and milk products. They chew betel. Some of them smoke *beedis* and cigarettes.

The Udaiyar Christian do not have social divisions. They follow endogamy at the community level. Consanguineous marriages are restricted by the church. However, they do marry the father's sister's daughter, mother's brother's daughter and sister's daughter with the permission of the church. However, the church imposes fines for such marriages. Marriage alliances are fixed by the elders through negotiation. Monogamy is the norm. The marriage symbol is the *thali*. Dowry is given in kind. They follow the rule of patrilocal residence. Divorce is not permitted. Remarriage is permitted for both widows and widowers. Sororate is permitted.

There are both nuclear and extended families among the Udaiyar Christian. No avoidance relationship is reported. A joking relationship is permitted among brothers-in-law and

between grandparents and grandchildren. The rule of inheritance is equigeniture. The eldest son succeeds as the head of the family. Changes noticed in the family structure are the decline of the extended family system.

Udaiyar Christian women have a role in agricultural operations, animal husbandry and other economic activities. They participate in social and religious functions. Though they do not have any decision-making powers, they are consulted by the men on family matters. Some of them earn and contribute to the family income. They control family expenditure.

The Udaiyar Christian conduct the first childbirth at the natal home of the pregnant woman with the help of a midwife or in hospital. The child is baptised on the thirtieth or fortieth day after birth. The child is named at the same time. Some of them tonsure their children at the end of the first year or during the third year. During adolescence, Confirmation is conducted and the child is admitted to full participation in the church. A person cannot receive the third sacrament, Holy Communion, till Confirmed. The child is taught the Holy Scriptures and made to understand Christianity before Confirmation.

The Udaiyar Christian observe puberty rites, known as *manjal neerattu vizha*, for girls. When a girl attains puberty, she is secluded for a week. On the seventh day, she is given a bath to mark the end of the seclusion. After thirty days, they conduct *sadangu*, during which the girl's maternal uncle gives her a sari, blouse, fruits, flowers and cosmetics and the elders bless her for an early marriage.

Marriage alliances are arranged by the Udaiyar Christian elders through negotiation. Weddings take place in the church. The betrothal is conducted at the bride's residence, with both parties exchanging betel and arecanuts. After the betrothal ceremony, the proposed alliance is announced in their respective churches (calling of banns). On the day of the wedding, the bride and bridegroom go to the church accompanied by relatives and friends. The solemnisation of the marriage begins with the exchange of vows by the bridal couple. Then the right hands of the bride and bridegroom are joined and holy water is sprinkled on them by the priest who then pronounces them

married. The *thali*, blessed by the priest, is tied around the neck of the bride. The couple then exchange garlands. The marriage ends with a prayer. The marriage is registered in the church marriage register with the signatures of the bride and bridegroom, two witnesses and the priest. A feast is given by the bridegroom's parents. The consummation of the marriage takes place on the same day at the bridegroom's residence.

The Udaiyar Christian bury their dead. When a death occurs, relatives and friends arrive to pay their last respects and participate in the funeral procession. The body is bathed and dressed in new clothes. The hands are joined and placed on the deceased's breast with a crucifix and a rosary. The priest, in his funeral robes, comes to the house, sprinkles holy water on the body and recites the funeral verses. The corpse is then taken to the church in a coffin for absolution. From the church, the coffin is carried to the cemetery for burial. At the cemetery, the body is blessed by the priest and then buried. On the 7th, 9th or 11th day, funeral rituals are observed. If the deceased is a male, the *thali* is removed from his widow on this day, prayers are said at the house and the grave is visited. A special mass is conducted in the church on the same day. These rituals are also observed annually, but, they specifically observe *kallarai thirunal*, All Souls' Day, to remember their ancestors.

The natural resource for the Udaiyar Christian is land. It is mainly a landowning community. Land ownership is by individual proprietorship. They cultivate paddy, chillies and groundnut in their land. Business, labour, government and private service and self-employment are their secondary occupations. They maintain links with the market directly as well as through middlemen. The form of exchange is in cash. Landlessness has caused a rise in the number of agricultural labourers. Wages are paid in cash.

A recently formed caste association called Tamil Nadu Parkavakula Sangam looks after the general welfare of the community and assists economically poor students to continue their studies. The church council, known as the parish council, administers the church.

The Udaiyar Christian are Roman Catholics. They worship

Jesus Christ, Mary and other saints. Christmas, New Year's Day, and Easter Sunday are their important festivals. They observe the Sunday Sabbath. Velankanni, Voriyur and Poondi, near Thanjavur, are their sacred centres. The parish priest, appointed by the Bishop of the Diocese concerned, acts as their priest. They also observe certain pre-conversion practices like the tying of the *thali* and marrying blood relatives.

The Udaiyar Christian accept water and food from other communities. They share wells and water sources with other communities. They visit Christian religious shrines and participate in festivals and festivities. They receive the services of the Vannan (washerman) and Ambattan (barber). They maintain patron-client, landlord-tenant and cultivator-labour relationships. There are businessmen, scholars, teachers, white-collar job-holders, engineers, doctors and defence personnel in the community.

The Udaiyar Christian show a favourable attitude towards formal education. They usually study upto the secondary school level. Students drop out from studies due to poverty. They favour modern medicare. They have access to all civic amenities.

D. Xaviour

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PARSI

The Parsi are of Persian origin. The term Parsi means 'one from Pars or Fars'. According to Ram Singh (1986), the present day Parsis are descendants of those Zoroastrians who fled from the province of Fars in Iran after the Muslim invasions of 642-650 A.D. They are said to have come in several batches, most of them by boat but some overland, and settled in Sanjan in Gujarat. They made India their home but retained their religious and ethnic identity. They adopted Gujarati as their mother tongue, borrowed some local customs, and mixed well with their neighbours. Later, they moved to other areas of the country — even down south, to Madras. They have their fire temple at Royapuram and, in the absence of a Tower of Silence, now a burial ground, also is in Royapuram.

The two aspects which have welded the Parsi community together for centuries are stated to be the observance of its complex rituals and the practice of endogamy. Traditionally the Parsi had surnames such as Belgamwala, Daruwala, Batliwala, and even names of their respective family occupations, such as Merchant, Doctor, Engineer and so on. But this practice is gradually declining and many of the young now prefer to use just their first name, unless it is necessary to append the surname.

The Parsi of Madras are regular nonvegetarian who do not eat beef. Some refrain from eating fish. Wheat and rice are their staple foods. They consume a lot of milk and milk products. They eat pulses, vegetables and fruits. They use groundnut and coconut oil for cooking. The Parsi say it is proper to drink liquor moderately but is a sin to drink beyond a certain limit. The orthodox Parsis refrain from smoking cigarettes because it is improper to pollute fire by putting it near the mouth. They do not chew betel leaves.

The Parsi practise endogamy very strictly in order to maintain their religious purity. They are, by and large, monogamous and are allowed to marry both parallel as well as cross-cousins. This practice, however, is not very common among them these days. Uncle-niece marriage is not practised by them.

Marriage by negotiation and marriage by mutual consent are

the common modes of acquiring mates among the Parsi of Madras. If a boy or a girl is unable to get a suitable spouse in Madras, then an alliance is sought from the Parsi living outside Madras, say from Bombay or Ahmadabad. Giving of dowry by the girl's parents was not a traditional practice among the Parsi, but has been incorporated due to Hindu influence. The marriage symbol is the ring and is exchanged by the couple at the time of marriage. Some Parsi women wear red glass bangles after marriage, which they say is a Gujarati practice.

If a Parsi woman marries outside the community, she cannot remain a Parsi nor can she enter the Fire Temple. If a Parsi man marries a non-Parsi, he is allowed to enter the temple, but his wife may not.

Divorce is allowed among the Parsi. Seven elders of the community constitute the jury, hear the case and decide whether divorce is to be granted or not. Their decision is final. If the jury agrees, the marriage is dissolved under the Parsi Divorce Act. The jury decides on the custody of the children as well. The rate of divorce among the Parsi is stated to be on the increase. Both widow and widower remarriages and divorcee remarriages are common among the Parsi and there are no social sanctions against such marriages.

The decision-making power is vested to an extent in the husband, though major decisions are taken after consulting the wife. If the couple have grown up children, they too are consulted regarding family matters. Since most Parsi women are employed, both husband and wife contribute to the family income, and family expenditure is controlled by either.

Most Parsis live in nuclear families. There are no strict rules regarding the inheritance of the ancestral property, it is stated. The property may be either divided equally among the children or the sons may get a larger proportion than the daughters.

Parsi women have a status equal to that of their men. They take part in all social and religious functions of the community. Almost all Parsi girls study up to at least college level and many go on to professional courses. Women are employed in almost all professions, ranging from school teachers to managers in

hotels. They interact with people of other communities without any reservations.

The Parsi are an economically united lot and never allow another Parsi to live in poverty, it is stated. The community maintains a high standard of living, which is reflected in their lifestyle.

Though orthodox Parsis used to observe and perform many life-cycle rituals, today, due to the pressures of modern life, the Parsi of Madras perform only a few of them. It is said that the first important event in a Zoroastrian's life is the *navjot* (the initiation ceremony). As their prophet Zoroaster laid emphasis on freedom of choice, a child born to Zoroastrian parents is not considered a Zoroastrian till he or she chooses the Zoroastrian faith at this ceremony. The *navjot* ceremony takes place between the ages of 7 and 15. A feast is arranged after the ceremony. The next important ceremony in the life of a Parsi is marriage.

In Madras, the Parsi community has a group of seven elders who are usually consulted on various social and religious occasions. This group is called the *anjuman*. The group is informed about a birth, marriage or death in a family. Though the *anjuman* was very powerful and strict in the past, it has now become quite liberal in Madras and the mechanism of social control operates mostly at the family level.

The Parsi of Madras have an association in which all the Parsis living in Madras are members, and they get together for religious and social functions.

The Parsi believe in their prophet Zoroaster. They have a prescribed Zoroastrian code of ethical conduct. The scriptural emphasis is on good thoughts, good words, good deeds, on the basis of Zoroastrian ethics. Fire is the most brilliant object (next to the sun) in the world and, according to the Parsi, the best emblem of God's worship upon the earth is fire.

A Zoroastrian priest is a man set apart from ordinary people by virtue of his specialised training and spiritual discipline. In Madras, there is a priest at the Fire Temple in Royapuram who takes care of all the ritual needs of the community.

Traditionally, the Parsi are said to have been excellent artisans and craftsmen. They had produced some of the finest carved

furniture in the country. The pride in creating something with their hands was strong among them. It is said that the Wadia brothers built their own ships about 200 years ago. Though the present-day Parsi of Madras are not much inclined towards their traditional crafts, parents encourage their children to learn and take part in cultural activities, such as concerts and dramas.

The Parsi of Madras maintain good relations with their neighbouring communities and accept and exchange food with them. They greet and visit people from other communities during festivals such as Deepavali, Christmas and Ramzan. They do not share their burial ground with non-Zoroastrians, and, in general, do not visit the shrines of other communities. Non-Zoroastrians are not allowed to visit the Fire Temple.

The Parsi attitude towards modern medicine and family planning is positive and most couples prefer to have only two children. They are an urban community in Tamil Nadu and have access to all civic amenities.

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PARVATHARAJAKULAM

The Parvatharajakulam also call themselves Neer Vellalar. Other communities refer to them as Karalayar, Semmati and Karlyatarga. The name Parvatharajakulam is a recent one. Previously they were called Karalayar.

References regarding the origin of the Parvatharajakulam community are not available. They are distributed through the coastal belt of Ramanathapuram, Kanniyakumari, South Arcot, Chengai-MGR and Tirunelveli Districts. Tamil is their mother tongue.

The Parvatharajakulam are nonvegetarian, but do not eat beef. They eat pork. Their staple foods are millets and rice. They eat a variety of pulses. They use groundnut oil for cooking. They take alcoholic drinks. They also drink coffee and tea. Most of them smoke *beedis*, some smoke cigarettes.

The Parvatharajakulam are considered Sudras, and rank with the Ambalakaran and Chettiar. They consider the Vellalar, Brahman and Vysya communities as superior to them in the social hierarchy.

The Parvatharajakulam are an endogamous group. There are no social divisions in the Parvatharajakulam community. They prefer consanguineous marriages, such as with the boy's sister's daughter. The marriageable age for girls and boys are 15-19 years and 18-24 years respectively. Monogamy is the norm. Polygyny is allowed in case the first wife is barren. Marriage by exchange and marriage by elopement are allowed. In case of elopement, both the girl and the boy have to pay *kaikuli*, a fine, to the *kula panchayat*. Widow remarriage is allowed. They do not perform any ceremony for this. Either spouse has the right to divorce. A divorced woman can remarry within their community.

The main feature of the Parvatharajakulam is the preponderance of nuclear families over extended families. The family, among the Parvatharajakulam, is characterised by patrilocal residence and patrilineal descent. The property is inherited by the sons. Daughters are not entitled to any share in the property, unless they do not have brothers.

The women of the Parvatharajakulam have a secondary status compared to their men. They participate in all social and religious activities along with the men. Most women work as daily wage labourers and participate in fishing and agriculture to support their families. A few women knit fishing nets and earn money to supplement their family income.

The Parvatharajakulam do not observe any pre-delivery rituals for a pregnant woman. She is taken to her natal home for the first delivery either during the seventh or ninth month. Childbirth entails pollution for 16 days. On the 16th day, a purificatory ceremony, known as *theetukazhithal*, is performed to terminate the pollution. The tonsuring ceremony is performed in the third or fifth year in a temple of Muniswamy, Mariamman or Murugan. If they conduct it in the temple of Mariamman, they have to sacrifice a fowl or a goat. The sacrificial animals are cooked and a feast is served to relatives and friends. Only those who can afford it conduct ear-boring ceremony.

Attainment of puberty for a Parvatharajakulam girl entails pollution for seven days. On the seventh or eleventh day, the *manjal neerattu vizha* is performed to terminate the pollution. She is given a purificatory bath and wears new clothes presented by her maternal uncle. The *nalungu* ceremony is then performed by married women to mark the end of pollution.

Marriage in the Parvatharajakulam community is preceded by a betrothal ceremony at the bride's home. There is no custom of bride-price, but the bridegroom's parents have to give *seervarisai* (gifts) to the bride, consisting of a sari, blouse and ornaments. Betel leaves and arecanuts are exchanged between the two families and each party pays Rs. 21 as *elavattapanam* to the *ambalakarar* as token of finalisation of the alliance. They also fix the date, time and place of marriage on the betrothal day. During the wedding, the *ambalakarar* performs *kanyadanam* (giving away of the bride). At the *muhurtham* time, the *thali*-tying ceremony takes place. The *thali* is given by the *ambalakarar* to the bridegroom after it has been blessed by the elders. A vegetarian feast is served to all.

The firstborn, among the Parvatharajakulam, are cremated. All others are buried. The body is disposed of on the same

day or the next day. *Udan pal* or *marunal pal* (milk pouring ceremony) is performed on the same or on the next day. Death entails pollution for 16 days. Pollution is terminated by performing *karumathi* or *periakaryam*. If the deceased had a wife, she is taken near a well or river and she removes her *thali, kumkum, metti* (toe-rings) and *valaiyal* (bangles). She is then given a white sari to wear. New clothes are given by the relatives to the sons of the deceased. A nonvegetarian feast is served.

Marine fishing is the traditional occupation of the Parvatharajakulam. Some are employed as fishermen in private fishing companies. A few run petty businesses. Their subsidary occupation is daily wage labour. They entirely depend on the market for their requirements. The mode of transaction is in cash. Most of their children are employed in privately-owned mechanised boats as daily wage labourers.

The caste panchayat system exists in the Parvatharajakulam community. The head of the village is called the *ambalakarar*. The *sammati* assists him. The posts are hereditary. The panchayat meets in the temple to decide their conflicts, quarrels, adultery, divorce, theft and other cases. Divorce is sanctioned by the caste panchayat. The caste panchayat can fix any amount of fine and compensation, depending upon the nature of the case. If any person violates their norms and does not obey the caste panchayat, then he and his family are socially boycotted and forbidden to attend any other ceremonies or functions. Cases of elopement are not taken seriously. The couple are asked to pay a fine to the caste panchayat, and they have to give a feast to all the villagers.

Most Parvatharajakulam are Saivites. Each household has its own family deity; the *kuladeivam* is usually Mariamman, Kali, Marithai or Karupannaswamy. They worship Murugan, Ranganathar and Siva as their regional deities. Many Parvatharajakulam villages celebrate an annual Mariamman festival. Sacrifices are made and the deity is taken in a procession through the streets of the village. They also celebrate Pongal, Karthigai Deepam, Sivaratri, Deepavali and Vinayaka Chaturthi.

The Parvatharajakulam interdine with the Agamudaiyan, Nadar and Thevar, with whom they claim equal status. They

do not interdine with the Muslims, Parayan and Chakkiliyan. Their relationship with other communities is cordial. All communities join in the common worship offered to the Goddess Mariamman. They share water sources with other castes except with the Parayan and Chakkiliyan. They have their own cremation ground.

Many Parvatharajakulam fishermen have shifted to mechanised boat fishing. They have started using nylon nets and fishing in the deep sea. They take loans from fishing cooperative societies and other nationalised banks.

The growth of education has been phenomenal and has led to the emergence of a middle class among the Parvatharajakulam. A few are now in government service. The Parvatharajakulam favour modern medicare and family planning. They have access to all civic amenities.

T.S. NAIDU

PATHAN

The Pathan, who subscribe to the fundamental doctrines of the Sunni branch of Islam, are said to have come to India from Baluchistan as warriors and later migrated to almost all parts of India. They are known as Pattan or Pattani in Tamil Nadu. Traditionally, the title *khan* (meaning lord or master) is suffixed to the name.

The Sunni Muslims of Tamil Nadu are divided into four groups — the Syed, the Shaikh, the Mughal and the Pathan. Though the Pathan of Tamil Nadu speak Urdu, they know Tamil well. Most of their religious books are in Arabic and the older generation is still able to read Arabic.

The Pathan are regular nonvegetarian, who eat beef but not pork. Their consumption of vegetables is moderate. Rice and wheat are their staple foods. They also eat pulses. They use groundnut oil for cooking. Fruits and sweetmeats are an important part of their festive diet. Some men have recently started consuming liquor and smoking cigarattes. Both men and women drink tea and coffee, and consume milk and milk products.

The Pathan usually live in extended families with the eldest male as head of the family. The daughter-in-law is expected to cover her head as a mark of respect in front of any elder male member of the family, especially the father-in-law. Avoidance relationship is observed between the mother-in-law and the son-in-law, daughter-in-law and the father-in-law, and the sister-in-law and the elder brother-in-law.

Although divorce is permitted among the Pathan, there are strong social sanctions against it. Divorce may be obtained on grounds of adultery, barrenness, maladjustment, chronic illness and insanity. Either the husband or the wife can get a divorce with the *khazi's* approval. "According to the Koran a probation period (*iddat*) must be observed by the divorced woman before marrying again, three months after a divorce, and in the case of a widow, four months and ten days after the death of her husband" (Sharif, 1972).

The Pathan are an endogamous group but at present have marital relations with other communities such as the Shaikh,

the Syed and the Mughal. Parallel and cross-cousin marriages are preferred. It is said that such marriages help to retain the property within the families. Though polygyny is permitted, it is seldom practised among the Pathan who are, by and large, monogamous. Polygyny is allowed with the consent of the first wife in case she is barren. Marriage by negotiation and marriage by exchange of sisters are the common modes of acquiring mates among the Pathan. The average age at marriage is between 18 and 24 for girls and 24 and 27 for boys.

The bridegroom's family is expected to give *mehar* (bride-price) to the bride and this is recorded in the register at the time of a Pathan marriage. But nowadays the practice of giving *mehar* is losing its value and it is usually not given at the time of marriage. The practice of giving dowry has become common.

Pathan women have an equal status with the men of the community. Though the women do not go to the mosque for prayers, they take part in all social and religious functions and festivals of the community. The eldest female member in a family usually controls the family expenditure. Women are employed in almost all the professions and contribute equally to the family income. They interact and mingle with women from other communities. Decision-making in the family is vested to a large extent in the eldest male member, though the other members are also consulted.

The pregnant Pathan woman is brought by her parents to their home during the fifth or the seventh month of her first pregnancy. A brief pre-delivery ceremony is performed. She is dressed in new clothes and her head and face are covered with a *sehra*, a veil of flowers. Sometimes, her husband is made to sit with her and the girl's parents present him a gold ring. Married women apply turmeric and sandalwood paste on the face and hands of the pregnant woman. A custom of performing *aarti* (a plate with lighted fire) to the couple is observed among the Pathan — perhaps an influence of their Hindu neighbours. This simple ceremony is followed by a feast which consists of dishes that are liked by the pregnant woman.

Soon after a Pathan child is born it is bathed and swaddled. A priest or a learned person whispers a prayer into the child's

right ear and the *kalima* in to his left. He then dips his finger in honey and puts it into the child's mouth before the child is nursed by the mother. Later the same day, the child is named by the priest or by an elderly person.

The Pathan usually perform the *aqiqa* (tonsuring) ceremony on the fortieth day after birth. The child is kept on the father's lap and its head is shaved by the family barber. The weight of the hair in silver is given to the *fakirs* or to the mosque, and the hair is tied in a cloth and buried or thrown into a river or pond. One goat is sacrificed if the ceremony is for a female child, two goats for a male child and a feast is served. The *sunnat* or circumcision is performed for boys between the ages of seven and twelve. Rice and other gifts are given to the barber who performs the act. A nonvegetarian feast follows.

A girl, on attaining first menstruation, is confined to a room for seven days. During this period she is prohibited from eating fish or meat. On the seventh day, she is bathed by her female relatives, each of them pouring two containers of water on her head. The girl is then dressed in new clothes and a feast is given. She receives gifts such as clothes and jewellery from the guests.

The *haldi* ceremony, applying turmeric on the bride and bridegroom a day before the marriage, is a custom among the Pathan. On the day of the *nikah* (marriage), the bridegroom comes on horseback or in a car in a procession, to the bride's house, or to the marriage hall, where he is received by the bride's party. His head and face are covered with strands of flowers. The *khazi* officiates at the *nikah*. He obtains the consent of the bride and bridegroom. When the amount of *mehar* is fixed, the priest informs the bridegroom and asks whether he accepts the terms. After the bridegroom has accepted the terms, the priest joins the hands of the bride and bridegroom and the bride's father covers the hands with a handkerchief. Selected verses from the Koran are then read by the priest. Later, the bridegroom's mother, or an elder sister, ties the *lacha* (*thali*) around the bride's neck. During the *nikah*, a tray is placed before the *khazi* with sugar candy, dried dates, betel leaves and almonds on it. These are thrown in all directions into the gathering soon after the *nikah* ceremony. After the

nikah, the *khazi* offers a prayer on behalf of the bride and bridegroom, and the couple are blessed by all those present. The marriage and the *mehar* are recorded in a register. Traditionally, the marriage feast is given by the bride's family as soon as the *nikah* is over, and the bridegroom's family hold the *walima* (reception) either the same evening or on the following day. But nowadays both families share the cost of the wedding feast.

In the event of death, the Pathan say that the sooner the body is buried, the quicker the deceased will reach heaven. Before burial, the body is bathed and covered with a shroud. The shroud is always white in the case of men and widows. Unmarried and married women are covered with a red shroud. The body is then placed in the *jansa* (coffin) in which it is carried to the burial ground. The body is placed in the grave in a north-south direction, with the head towards the north. On the third day, the relatives visit the grave, offer dried fruits and recite verses from the Koran. Prayers are repeated on the tenth, twentieth and thirtieth days. On the fortieth day, the priest is called home and prayers are held. A nonvegetarian feast is served.

Traditionally, the Pathan were traders and moneylenders. But today they are engaged in almost all branches of economic activity. Men are employed in all walks of life; there are businessmen, scholars, teachers, administrators, engineers, doctors, bank officers and white-collar employees.

The Pathan belong to the Sunni sect of Islam. The Sunnis came into existence as a sect earlier than the Shia sect in Arabia. They accept the *Sunnah* (tradition) and doctrines based on tradition and not just on the direct statements of the Koran. The Pathan, like other Muslims, pray five times a day. The men generally go to the mosque for prayers while the women pray at home. The priest takes part in almost all the religious functions of the community and acts as an advisor and counsellor for the community.

Some Pathans engage themselves in certain crafts like matmaking, basket-making and cloth-weaving for a livelihood. It is said that, in the past, the Pathan were master carpet-weavers, but this art has died out.

The Pathan have developed good relations with their neighbouring communities. They accept and exchange food with others. However, they do not share their cemetry with non-Muslims and do not visit the shrines of other communities.

Formal education is favoured by the Pathan for their children. Many students go in for higher studies and professional courses. The community's attitude towards modern medicine and family planning is positive. They have access to all civic amenities and government programmes.

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PATTANAVAN

The Pattanavan are marine fisherfolk inhabiting 402 villages all along the coastal strip of Tamil Nadu. They are referred to as Karaiyan (seashore people) and Meenavar (fishermen). Chettiar, Pillai, Naicker, Vellalar and Mudali are their titles. Etymologically, *pattanavan* means a dweller in a town. The word *pattanavar* is also considered to be a corrupt form of *pattuneivor*, meaning 'knitters of silk thread' as, according to legend, they supplied silk thread to Lord Siva (Thurston, 1909). Regarding their origin, Thurston (1909) mentions that "some five thousand years ago, during the age of the lunar race, there was one Dasa Raja, who was ruling near Hastinapura, and was childless. To secure offspring, he prayed to God, and did severe penance. In answer, to his prayer, God pointed out a tank full of lotus flowers, and told the king to go thither, and call for children. Thereon, five thousand children issued forth from the flowers, to the eldest of whom the king bequeathed his kingdom, to the others money in abundance. Those who received the money travelled southward in ships, which were wrecked, and they were cast ashore. This compelled them to make friends of local sea fishermen, whose profession they adopted. At the present day, the majority of the Pattanavan are sea fishermen and catch fish with nets from catamarans". However, many Pattanavan have no knowledge of their origin.

Tamil is the mother tongue of the Pattanavan. Those of them living in the Tirunelveli and Kanniyakumari Districts are conversant with Malayalam also. They use the Tamil script.

The Pattanavan are regular nonvegetarian, who eat pork also. Their staple foods are rice and millets. They eat all vegetables, roots and tubers. They use groundnut oil for cooking. They drink coffee, tea and milk products. Men smoke *beedis*, cigarettes and indigenous cheroots and chew betel and tobacco. A few use snuff. Some of them are addicted to liquor, while some men and women take alcoholic drinks occasionally.

The two major groups among the Pattanavan are the Periya Pattanavan and Chinna Pattanavan. In some areas, the Periya Pattanavan claim a higher status, while in other areas, the

Chinna Pattanavan claim they all have equal status. The Periya Pattanavan are those who claim to be the original settlers of coastal Tamil Nadu, north of Pondicherry, and the Chinna Pattanavan are the original settlers of theTamil Nadu coastal belt, south of Pondicherry. These two groups used to be endogamous, but nowadays there are marriage alliances between them.

Monogamy is the norm among the Pattanavan. Sororal polygyny exists, but rarely. The age at marriage for girls is 17-20 years and for boys 25-30 years. They prefer a man marrying his father's sister's daughter or mother's brother's daughter or his sister's daughter. Bride-price is given in kind. They do not encourage divorce, though it is allowed. Either spouse can demand divorce on grounds of maladjustment, ill-treatment, cruelty and adultery. Divorce is granted by the caste panchayat. In some areas, if a wife divorces her husband, she has to pay compensaion to her husband, as fixed by the caste panchayat. The children become the responsibility of the father. Divorcees and widows are allowed to remarry in a simple ceremony.

Both nuclear and vertically extended families exist among the Pattanavan. The father is the head of the family. A joking relationship exists between brothers-in-law, sisters-in-law and grandparents and grandchildren. They follow the male equigeniture rule of inheritance. Succession is by the eldest son.

Pattanavan women do all the domestic work. Some of them work as agricultural labourers too. Mostly they sell fish in the market, if the catch is not auctioned. They dry the rest of the fish for sale. They have a role in religious rituals and social functions conducted in their homes. The educated, in urban centres, are employed. In the past, they had no right to parental property, but nowadays, in urban areas, daughters also get a share in the property.

Pattanavan families which can afford it, celebrate a pre-delivery ritual for their daughters by giving her a new sari, blouse, glass bangles and flowers and by serving a meal to all relatives who attend the occasion. Birth pollution is observed for 9-16 days. On the last day, the mother and child are given purificatory baths. The naming of the child takes place on the

same day. An elderly member of the family gives the name. The tonsuring ceremony is performed when the child is one or three.

When a Pattanavan girl attains puberty, her maternal uncle is informed. She is given a purificatory bath with turmeric water, dressed and made to sit in a separate room. Puberty pollution lasts for nine days, during which an ounce of gingelly oil and an egg is given to her every morning. Relatives offer her special food items. On the ninth day, she is given a ceremonial bath (*manjal neerattu vizha*) and taken into the house. Later, she is dressed in a new sari given by her maternal uncle or her parents. A feast is served.

Among the Pattanavan, the bridegroom's family takes the initiative and approach the girl's family to negotiate a marriage. When both parties agree, the betrothal ceremony (*nichayathamboolam*) takes place at the girl's house to confirm the alliance. *Pariyam* (bride-price) is paid in the form of jewellery. Usually eight grams of gold are given. It is necessary to get the approval of the community panchayat leaders of the *kuppams* (settlements) for a marriage. The marriage takes place at the bridegroom's place and a feast is given by his family. The consummation ceremony takes place at the bride's natal residence.

It is stated by the Pattanavan that there are three forms of marriage among them: *vaidhika murai* (traditional orthodox style), *seerthirutha murai* (reformist style) and *koil thali* (tying the *thali* in the temple). In the *vaidhika murai*, they call a priest and perform *kanyadhan* (giving away of the bride) ritual first and then tie the *thali* in the traditional Hindu style, in front of a sacred fire (*homam*). In the *seerthirutha murai*, the local leaders of the political party to which the bridegroom's family is affiliated are invited and, in their presence, the boy ties the *thali*. In the *koil thali*, the bride and bridegroom are taken to a temple, where the bridegroom ties the *thali* around the neck of the bride. The poor resort to the *koil thali* marriage. A feast is given in all the marriages.

Death pollution lasts for 16 days among the Pattanavan. Adults are cremated and children are buried. They dispose of the ashes at sea. They do not eat nonvegetarian food during

these days. On the 16th day, they bathe and serve a feast to relatives and friends to mark the end of pollution.

Fishing is their traditional occupation. Most of them use catamarans and nets. A catamaran is usually two or four logs of wood, firmly tied with ropes made of coconut fibre. When they use a single log catamaran, two men go on it. When they tie two logs, then four men go on it. If they tie four logs together, then about eight people go on the float. When they encounter a big wave, they jump off the boat and get on to the catamaran on the other side of the wave. It involves a lot of skill. The Pattanavan still hold the monopoly on catamaran fishing. Older men sit on the beach sands and engage themselves in knitting and repairing the nets.

The Pattanavan auction the day's catch immediately on returning to shore. This is done through their cooperative societies organised by the State government. During such auctions, before giving the fish to the buyer, a handful of fish is taken out and the fish thus collected is sold. This money is given to their caste panchayat office to spend on the welfare programmes of the people living in the particular *kuppam* (village).

When the Pattanavan hire the catamarans, the owner takes 50 per cent of the catch or the income from the catch. If a group of Pattanavan borrow a mechanised boat, they not only bear the diesel and maintenance charges but also pay 60 per cent of the value of the net income. If a fisherman borrows money or takes an advance from a catamaran owner, he has to render an equal amount of service to the latter.

The Pattanavan have an effective community panchayat. Each *kuppam* has its own panchayat. It has a leader, called *yejamanan* in the past, but now panchayat *thalaivar* (headman). *Thandakaran* is an assistant to the *thalaivar* and his duty is to summon panchayat meetings. The panchayat settles disputes, of all kinds. The panchayat also imposes cash fines on the guilty and the money is used for the settlement's welfare.

The Pattanavan are Hindus. The urbanised worship deities such as Venkatesa, Murugan, Vinayakar and Mariamman. They also visit temples at Tirupati, Tiruttani, Tiruverkadu and Arani. Those in rural areas worship Angalamman, Mariatha

and Veeranand. In some areas, they sacrifice a goat on the seashore during the month of *Chittirai* (April-May) in the name of the seven *kannimar* (virgins) to get a good catch. They call this *kola.*

The Pattanavan revere Naguran, a Muslim saint whose *dargah* (place of worship) is at Nagapattinam (Thanjavur District). Many of them visit the *dargah* of Naguran when they confront a difficult situation at sea. They engage a Pandaram or a Brahman or a Sathatha Vaishnava to conduct different rituals and ceremonies. They celebrate Pongal, Deepavali and Mariamman festivals. Some of them have adopted Christianity and live in separate *kuppams.*

The Pattanavan are experts in knitting fishing nets. In the past, men knitted these nets with cotton yarn, but nowadays most of them do so with synthetic yarn.

The Pattanavan have the services of the barber and washerman during social and religious functions. They accept food and water from communities of equal status. There are teachers, white-collar job-holders and businessmen among them.

The Pattanavan are in favour of educating their children, both boys and girls. They use modern and traditional medicare. They welcome family planning programmes. The State Fisheries Department has introduced some special programmes to alleviate the socioeconomic conditions of the marine and inland fisherfolk. There is also an insurance scheme for fishermen, and a fisherman's savings-cum-relief scheme. The Pattananavan benefit from these. They also avail of the subsidy for procuring fishing gear, radios to hear weather reports and building lighthouses at different places to enable the fishermen to know the direction in the night. More than 9000 apartments have been constructed and given to them in Madras alone.

RAJALAKSHMI MISRA

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PATTARIYAR

The Pattariyar are also known as Adaviyar. The meaning of the word *adavi* is 'forest' and the name refers to their living in the forest in the past. The word *pattu* means silk. As they are silk weavers, they are called Pattariyar. They have titles such as Ariyar and Adaviyar. The king of Ayodhya, it is said, used to refer to them as Ariyar. The Pattariyar believe that they migrated to their present habitat from Ayodhya. They supplied silk clothes to a king in Ayodhya. In course of time, the throne was usurped by a minister, whom the Pattariyar were reluctant to oblige. And so they decided to migrate *en masse*. On the way, they passed through forests. They also lived for some time in the forest, *i.e. adavi*, before they migrated to the South.

The Pattariyar are distributed mainly in the districts of Kanniyakumari, Tirunelveli and Thanjavur. They are a Tamil-speaking people and use the Tamil script.

The Pattariyar are nonvegetarian, but abstain from eating beef or pork. Their staple food is rice. They consume pulses, vegetables, roots and tubers, and fruit. They use coconut oil and groundnut oil for cooking. They drink coffee and tea. They consume milk and milk products. Some of them smoke *beedis* and cigarettes, chew betel and use snuff.

The social divisions among the Pattariyar are clans associated with deities and lineages. The functions of the social divisions are to regulate marriage alliances and to indicate descent. Marriage alliances are prohibited within the same clan and lineage. They have forgotten the names of the clans, but remember clan deities. Ayurpratiamman, Vandimalachiamman and Muthachiamman are some of their clan deities. Lineage is reckoned through the clan deities. They are aware of the *varna* system and consider themselves Sudras. They believe that they are inferior to the communities such as the Brahman and the Chettiar, and superior to communities such as the Vannan and the Ambattan. They claim equal status with other weaver communities.

The Pattariyar are an endogamous community. Cross-cousin marriages are permitted. They marry either their mother's

brother's daughter or father's sister's daughter. Maternal uncle-niece marriages are permitted, but not prevalent. Boys get married at 23-30 years and girls at 21-25. Monogamy is the norm. The symbol of marriage for women is the *thali*. Bride-price is not paid. Dowry is given in cash and kind. Widower remarriage is allowed. Widow remarriage is not permitted. Sororate is permitted.

Nuclear and joint families exist in the Pattariyar community. A joking relationship is seen among brothers-in-law as well as among sisters-in-law and between grandparents and grandchildren. There is no avoidance relationship among them. All the sons get equal shares of parental property. The eldest son succeeds as the head of the family after the father's death.

Pattariyar women do not have a status equal to that of their men. They do not have any rights over ancestral property. They mostly do household work. Some of them earn and contribute to the family income. Some of them are employed as teachers or clerks. They help the men with weaving. They participate in social and religious functions along with their men.

The Pattariyar observe pre-delivery rituals such as *valaikappu*. It is performed at the husband's house during the seventh or ninth month of pregnancy. The pregnant woman's mother brings her a sari, blouse, bangles and sweets. She wears the new clothes brought by her mother. All the elders bless her for a safe and easy confinement. Later, she is taken to her natal home for the delivery. They give herbal medicine to the woman for about thirty days after delivery. They observe birth pollution for ten days. On the tenth day, a ceremonial bath is given to both the mother and the child. The naming ceremony is conducted on the 16th day. In some places, the naming of the child is done immediately after birth. After one year, ear-boring and tonsuring ceremonies are conducted.

The Pattariyar observe *sadangu* (puberty rites) for girls. When a girl attains puberty, her *attai* (father's sister) or the daughter of the *attai* comes and pours water on her head. Later she takes a bath and goes to a secluded place arranged for her in the house. On the tenth day, she has a ceremonial bath to end pollution. On the same day, a function is conducted. A few relatives and friends are invited to this. The maternal

uncle gives the girl a sari, blouse and cosmetics. The invitees also give gifts and bless her for an early marriage.

Marriages are arranged by Pattariyar elders through negotiation. The marriage ceremony is completed within a day. A Brahman priest is called to officiate at the marriage ceremony. At the fixed *muhurtham* (auspicious time), the bridegroom ties the *thali* around the neck of the bride. The bride and bridegroom shower turmeric-stained rice on each other's heads. The consummation ceremony (*shanti muhurtham*) takes place on the same day or on the following day. Before the marriage, the bridegroom wears the *poonool* (sacred thread) and removes it after the completion of the wedding ceremony.

The Pattariyar cremate their dead. The corpse is bathed and carried to the cremation ground. They engage the drummer who plays the *urumi* drum, in the death procession. On the next day, they collect the *asthi* (bones and ashes) of the deceased and dispose of it in the sea at Kanniyakumari or in a river. They observe death pollution for 16 days. On the 16th day, they conduct a ceremony to end death pollution. On that day they do *gruha sudhi* (cleaning of the house). A Brahman priest is called to officiate at the ceremony. A feast is given to the relatives. To observe death rites, all sons of the deceased tonsure their heads. They also wear the *poonool* while doing the death rites. After one year, the Pattariyar conduct *thithi* (annual death ceremony) in memory of the departed soul. On that day, the deceased's widow may be taken to Kanniyakumari for a ceremonial bath in the sea. They worship their ancestors.

The main resource of the Pattariyar community is weaving. Very few of them are in possession of cultivable land. Their traditional occupation is silk weaving. Their primary occupation, now is cotton weaving. Due to financial problems they switched over to cotton weaving. A few of them run petty businesses. Some of them are employed in government service. Others work as agricultural labourers and daily wage workers in the cotton mills. They depend on the local market for their requirements. The mode of transaction is in cash.

The traditional caste council exists in some villages to settle disputes among the Pattariyar over land and water, disrespect for traditional norms and thefts. Usually disputes are settled

amicably, though sometimes cash fines are imposed. They have their caste association, which is a registered body. Its function is to look after the welfare of the community people.

The Pattariyar are Hindus. They have clan deities such as Ayurpratiamman, Vandimalachiamman and Muthachiamman. They have clan deity temples in different villages and the clan deities are worshipped as family deities. *Adi Pooram,* their community festival, is celebrated in Nagercoil, Kanniyakumari District. They celebrate it as the birthday of the Goddess Shakti. To celebrate the festival they take oilbaths and wear new clothes early in the morning. The children play with coconuts, rolling them on the floor against one another and making them break. The broken parts of the coconut are kept before the *tiruvilakku* (a metal lamp with stand) and they worship Shakti. This is performed in the house. Afterwards, they go to their temple and worship the deity. They celebrate other Hindu festivals, such as Deepavali and Pongal. They also participate in the festival of the Bhagavatiamman temple in Kanniyakumari. Traditionally, the Pattariyar supply cloth to the Suchindram temple for its temple flag.

The Pattariyar are expert weavers. They have an oral tradition consisting of folk-songs and folk-tales.

The Pattariyar accept uncooked food from all communities. They accept water and cooked food from the Brahman and the Chettiar and exchange the same with communities such as the Chayakkaran, Saliar, Vellalar and Krishnavaka. Generally, they do not share their cremation grounds with other communities. They maintain patron-client, landlord-tenant and cultivator-labourer relationships. The community has petty businessmen, engineers, technicians, teachers and white-collar job holders.

The attitude of the Pattariyar is favourable to formal education. But some drop out from studies due to poverty or social reasons. The Pattariyar favour modern medicare and family planning. They have access to all civic amenities and government programmes especially made available for the weaving communities.

D. XAVIOUR

PERUMAL MATTUKKARAN

The Perumal Mattukkaran has synonyms like Pooyadayar, Bhoombhoommattukkaran, Gangireddulvallu, Gangireddulavandlu. Their popular name is Perumal Mattukkaran in the northern districts and Azhagar Mattukkaran in the southern districts. The community does not have any specific titles of its own.

The Perumal Mattukkaran, were known as Pooyadayar as they were the makers of flower garlands for gods such as Perumal or Sri Venkateswara or Azhagar Swami. They supplied flower garlands to the deities and cultivated the temple lands. Every year, they also supplied some quantity of paddy to the temple. It is said that Lord Perumal once asked the community, during the harvest, about their crop. They replied that the yield of paddy and millets was high. Then the Lord gave them choice of keeping one part of the crop for themselves *i.e.* the *keevaram* (lower portion of the crop) or *mevaram* (upper portion of the crop). The community selected *mevaram*, which containsed the paddy and millets and offered the *keevaram*, which contained stems and leaves of the plants, to the temple. The next year, when they had planted groundnut, the Lord again thought to test the Pooyadayar and asked them to choose between *adivaram* (the part in the ground) and *mevaram* (which contained the leaves of the plants). They again returned the fodder to the temple and selected the yield. Because of their avarice, Perumal cursed them and ordained they become alms-collectors. When the Pooyadayar realised their greed, they pleaded with the Lord to free them from the curse. The Lord then allowed them to collect alms with a Perumal bull (Perumal temple bull). They started collecting alms by displaying the bull in the streets. So, they came to be known as Perumal Mattukkaran (who display the Perumal bull or those who keep the Perumal bull with them). While they conduct the bull-show, they play the *cendrum* (a musical instrument) which gives a 'bhoom bhoom' sound. The instrument is also known as *bhoom bhoom*. Hence, they are also called Bhoomattukaran or Bhoombhoommattukkaran. Azhagar Swami is a synonym of

Lord Perumal. So the community is also known as Azhagar Mattukkaran in some areas. They are also known as Gangireddulavallu in Telugu country because they keep a *gangireddu* (a bull which nods its head for each and every question).

The Perumal Mattukkaran have too territorial subgroups without any specific names. The northern group, does not maintain any material relationship with the southern group. Each one calls the other group *paradisamyodu* (other country fellow). But the people of one group address the people of the other group as *anna, akka* (elder brother and sister). Some of them say that they migrated from Tiruvanaikkaval to their present habitat, while others say that they migrated from the Telugu country since their mother tongue happens to be Telugu.

Thé Perumal Mattukkaran are distributed in many parts of Tamil Nadu and Andhra Pradesh. Though it is a small population, they are widely scattered. Their concentration is most in Thanjavur District, but they are also found in other districts of Tamil Nadu.

The Perumal Mattukkaran speak a corrupt form of Telugu among themselves and Tamil with others. They use the Tamil script.

The Perumal Mattukkaran have their own identification marks. Generally, the men wear an old coat, a turban, the Vaishnava *namam* (mark) on the forehead and ear studs. They carry a *keesara anchi* (a kind of shoulder bag) and some musical instruments, *viz. sannai, samalam, sutti* and *eendram.* The most significant identification of the Perumal Mattukkaran is the decorated bull, which accompanies them on their alms collecting rounds.

Both men and women of the Perumal Mattukkaran communtiy are occasional nonvegetarian, who eat pork and wild game. They consume all varieties of pulses, vegetables, roots and tubers. Their staple food is rice, *kammulu* and *ragi.* Both men and women take alcoholic drinks occasionally. The men smoke *beedis* and cigarettes, chew betel and tobacco, and use snuff.

The Perumal Mattukkaran are divided into the following

kulams (clans): Kalchanodu (a shepherd of the Skira community), Mogalodu (one who wears a red cap), Akulodu (a person who comes from the flood), Yerupainodu (a cobbler from the Madiga community), Mongodu (a shepherd from the Korava community), Pankodu (a potter from the Kummara community), Sarunodu (a person from a higher community), Daravodu (a person from a weaver community), Purandavodu (a person from a Pandaram community), Kattupoinodu (a person from a Pandaram community), Bogodu (a person from an Odda community) and Gilagavodu (a person who makes *gilakalu* from a Koracha community).

No hierarchy prevails among the clans. The clans are mainly used to regulate marriage alliances as well as to indicate descent. The community feels that they are equal to the Mala, Madiga, Chakkiliyan, Parayan and Sambavar communities of the local area.

The Perumal Mattukkaran follow community level endogamy and clan level exogamy. Consanguineous marriages are prevalent in the community. They practise both types of cross-cousin marriages as well as uncle-niece marriage. Junior sororate is allowed. Girls get married between 12 and 16 years, and boys between 16 and 22 years. Monogamy is the marital norm. However, both types of sororal polygyny as well as junior sororate are allowed in the community. Vermilion, *thali* and toe-rings are the marriage symbols of the Perumal Mattukkaran women. Bride-price is paid both in cash and kind. The bride-price is at present Rs.51, apart from quantities of *kallu* and *sarayam*. But in the case of widows and divorcee remarriages, the bridegrooms pay only half the usual bride-price, *kallu* and *sarayam*. They followed patrilocal rule of residence, but now, they observe neolocal residence. Divorce is allowed by social sanction on grounds of adultery, barrenness, maladjustment and cruelty. Either spouse can initiate divorce. If the wife initiates divorce, her parents have to return the *oli* (bride-price) to her husband. In case the husband initiates it, he cannot get back the *oli*, but he pays no compensation to his wife. Children are the responsibility of either parent, as suggested by the community elders. Widows, widowers and male and female divorcees can remarry in a simple ceremony called

kaipuduchu kalyanam. Considerable changes have been noticed in their institution of marriage. At present, they even allow marriage between the Kalchanodu and Daravodu clans. There has been a considerable increase in the age at marriage. In the past, the women wore a *gutta bottu,* a black bead necklace, as a *thali.* Now they wear the *thirumangalayam* like other Hindu communities.

The joint family is the most common among the Perumal Mattukkaran. However, nuclear families are also socially allowed. They do not have any type of avoidance relationship. They have joking relationships between sisters-in-law and brothers-in-law and between grandparents and grandchildren. They follow the male equigeniture rule of inheritance and the rule of succession is by the eldest son.

The Perumal Mattukkaran women have a role in agricultural operations and animal husbandry. They also participate in their traditional economic activities. Women participate in the bull shows by playing the *eendram.* Some women participate in the 'Nalatunga Katha' (a folk-tale). Some of the women work as agricultural labourers and daily wage casual labourers. They are hard-working women. They take part in the festivals and rituals of their community. But women do not have any role in the community's social control.

The Perumal Mattukkaran observe a simple pre-delivery ritual called *sreemantham* during the seventh or ninth month of a woman's first pregnancy. The pregnant woman's maternal relatives come to her house to conduct the ritual. The relatives cook a variety of food and serve a feast to a small number of invitees. They present new bangles to the pregnant woman. The delivery is conducted in her husband's house. When the child is born, they put a Vaishnava *namam* on the child's forehead and small caunations on its abdomen to ward off diseases. For three days the mother is fed only coffee or tea or milk. On the third day, a bath is given to the mother and then she is fed *choru* (rice). On the 16th day, the mother has a purificatory bath and this ends pollution. They also conduct the naming ceremony on this day and tie a waistband for a girl child. They conduct the tonsuring ceremony in the third, fifth or seventh year at a Vaishnava temple. Female children

have their ears bored on the occasion. They call a man from the Gajulottu community to conduct the ear-boring ceremony and a Mangali man to do the tonsuring.

The Perumal Mattukkaran observe puberty rites for girls. When a girl first menses (*savatta*), a turmeric water bath is given to her. The girl's maternal uncle is informed and he makes a hut for her stay during the pollution period. They observe puberty pollution for 16 days. During the pollution period, the girl is not fed nonvegetarian food, except eggs. She is given *ragi puttu*, eggs and gingelly oil. On the 16th day, a ceremonial bath is given to the girl to end the pollution. Then they allow the girl inside the house after performing *dristi parinasam* (warding off the evil eye). The girl's maternal uncle gives her bangles, a sari and a blouse. They feed the invitees with *pulagam koodu*. The girl is also fed with *pulagam*. They call the puberty ceremony *savatta* or *savatta kalanam*.

The Perumal Mattukkaran acquire mates by negotiation. Traditionally the bridegroom's party carries toddy and arrack to the bride's house and negotiate with the bride's parents in the presence of village elders of their own community. The bridegroom's parents pay Rs.12 as *oor kasu* to the village elders (*ur peddalu* or *ajagadu*). As a sign of fixing the marriage, a feast is given to the bridegroom's party at the bride's house. Later, the bride's party comes to the bridegroom's house to conduct the betrothal. On that day, the parents of the bridegroom arrange a feast for the bride's party. Later, the bridegroom's party take a sari and blouse to the bride, fix the marriage time and venue, and invite the bride's party to the marriage. After the marriage, a feast is served to all the invitees, at the marriage *pandal*. On the day after the marriage, the couple visit all their relatives. On the next day, they offer *veeranardevudu*. They select a young boy and call him *veeranardevudu*. The boy is seated under the shade of a tree, and has to fast from morning till evening. In the evening they apply sandal powder to his entire body and offer *pongal* to the *veeranaradevudu*. The boy is then said to be possessed by the spirit of the god (*sarri vastadu*). Later, they sacrifice a goat to the *veeranardevudu*. The flesh of the goat is cut into equal shares and distributed in the village. The marriage expenses

are shared at a fixed rate by the parents of both the bridegroom and the bride. The consummation ceremony takes place at the bridegroom's house two or three months after the marriage.

In the Perumal Mattukkaran community the news of a death is immediately communicated to relatives particularly to the *pangali*. They bathe the corpse and adorn its forehead with the Vaishnava *namam*. The dead are buried. They play their own funeral music. On the third day after the burial, all the *pangali* go to the burial ground to pour milk on the grave (*pal poyadam*). On that day, all the *pangali* have a nonvegetarian feast. They observe death pollution for 16 days. On the 16th day, the sons of the deceased tonsure their heads and conduct the death ceremony (*karumathi*). On the *karumathi* day, they conduct *guru puja*, in which they give gifts to three of their community elders. They observe only one annual ceremony (*thivasam*), after the first year. They observe ancestor worship yearly on the third day of the Pongal festival.

The Perumal Mattukkaran are a landless community. Their traditional occupations are alms collection and hunting as well as trapping birds and animals for self-consumption. They still collect alms on the streets with the Perumal bull, but do not do hunting any longer. In the past, the Perumal Mattukkaran would train and use the bulls that were donated to the temples of Vishnu by the affluent. Such donations of bulls are now very rare. So the Perumal Mattukkaran no longer have bulls to conduct shows with. Instead, they play film music on their *nadaswarams* to attract attention. Most of them are experts in *padam padalan* (singing folk-tales) and sing the *Raja Dasingh Katha* and *Nallathangal Katha*. They are semi-nomads, who do their alms collections during three months, *Chittirai*, *Vaigasi* and *Ani*. Most of them go to different States of South India to collect alms. They collect alms from all the upper castes. During the agricultural season, the men and women as well as children work as agricultural labourers and unskilled labourers in the towns. In the non-season period, both men and women go out to collect alms.

The Perumal Mattukkaran have traditional caste councils (*kula panchayats*) in their villages. An *ajagadu* is known as an

oor thalaivar or village head. Moreover, they have other caste council members, *viz.*, *karyadarsi* (secretary), *thalaivar* (president) and *kanakkapillai* (treasurer), each of them has specific duties to perform. In any matter, the panchayat takes the final decision. The *ajagadu* informs the panchayat's decision to the community. Traditionally, the *ajagadu* was a hereditary office, but nowadays they select all panchayat members by voice vote. They levy cash fines. They have also raised the divorce compensation to Rs.5000 to reduce the incidence of divorce in the community. Moreover, they have one more panchayat, an apex body, for the entire community residing in a particular region, *viz.*, *Pottulakutam.* All the *oor panchayat* members are members of the *Pottulakutam.* The *Pottulakutam* settles disputes that have not been solved by the *oor panchayat* and works for the welfare of the community.

The Perumal Mattukkaran are Vaishnavites. However, a few of them, belonging to such lineage as Akulodu, Sarunodu, Purandavodu and Bogodu, wear holy ash on the forehead, as a mark of devotion to Lord Siva, besides wearing the traditional Vaishnava *namam.* Nowadays, they do not have sectoral differences among them. They have a few village deities, like Ammavar and Ayyanavar. Their family deity and community deity is Lord Perumal. The community's sacred specialists are their own elders. They are called *gurus.* A *guru* is called to officiate at marriage ceremonies and to perform death rites. They celebrate major Hindu festivals, like Pongal and Deepavali. They fast on all Saturdays of the month of *Purattasi.* Their women perform Lakshmi Puja on *Purattasi* Friday. Most Perumal Mattukkaran attend the *ther* (chariot) festival of the Kallamkural Perumal Koil in the month of *Panguni.*

The Perumal Mattukkaran have an oral tradition comprising folk-tales and folk-songs. They are experts in *padam* (singing folk-tales) and *burrakatha.* They use different types of percussion musical instruments, *viz. tavul*, *samalam* and *talam*, and wind instruments such as *sannai* (*nadaswaram*) and *sutti.*

Traditionally, the Perumal Mattukkaran accepted water and cooked food from the higher ranking communities. Nowadays, they accept food and water from all communities. Intercommunity marriages were traditionally not permitted, but a few

have now taken place. They share water sources with other communities and participate in their fairs and festivals.

Perumal Mattukkaran children, generally, do not go to school. Even if they do, they drop out at the primary or secondary school level, as they have to assist their elders in the bull shows. They use both traditional and modern medicare. They accept family planning, largely in order to get the cash incentives. They have access to modern amenities.

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PERUMKOLLAR

The Perumkollar are an artisan community living in the Coimbatore, Salem and Dharmapuri Districts. They prefer to call themselves Viswakarma or Achari, while other communities refer to them as Achari because they do metal work. They differ from the other blacksmiths because they specialise in making bullock cart wheels. Achari is used by them as a title. They consider themselves different from the Kamsali (goldsmith). Tamil is their mother tongue, but a few of them know Telugu and Malayalam.

The Perumkollar are nonvegetarian, but abstain from eating beef and pork. Their staple foods are *ragi* and rice. They eat pulses, vegetables and fruits. For cooking they use groundnut oil. They drink coffee and tea. Most of them smoke *beedis*.

The Perumkollar have several *veettu peru* which govern their marital relations. They are considered Sudras, and rank socially along with the Vanniyar, the Gounder, the Naidu and the Chettiar of the region. They consider the Vellalar, the Brahman and the Vaisya communities as superior to them in the social hierarchy. They consider the Parayan and Chakkiliyan as inferior to them.

The Perumkollar are an endogamous group and prefer consanguineous marriages. The marriageable age for girls and boys is 18 and 24 years respectively. Monogamy is the norm. Polygyny is allowed in case the first wife is barren. Marriage by exchange is allowed. Bride-price, known as *pariyapanam*, is paid.

The local name for a family is *kudumbam*. Nuclear families are more numerous than extended ones. They follow patrilocal residence and patrilineal descent. Property, belonging to the head of the family, is inherited by his sons. Daughters do not get any share unless they have no brothers.

Perumkollar women have a secondary status compared to their men. They participate in all social and religious activities along with their men. An aged mother has a respectable position at home. Women largely do domestic work and rear children.

A pregnant Perumkollar woman is taken to her natal home

for the first delivery either in the seventh or ninth month. Childbirth entails pollution for nine days. On the ninth day, a purificatory ceremony known as *theetukazhithal* is performed to terminate the pollution. The tonsuring ceremony is performed when the child is three or five, at the temple of Mariamman. They sacrifice a fowl or a goat on the occasion. Only the affluent perform the ear-boring ceremony (*kadanivizha*).

Attainment of puberty for a Perumkollar girl entails pollution for 11 days. On the 11th day, they perform *manjal neerattu vizha* to terminate pollution. On this day, a purificatory bath is given the girl and she is presented a new sari by her maternal uncle. The *nalungu* (anointing with turmeric paste) ceremony is performed for her by married women. This ceremony marks the end of pollution.

Marriage among the Perumkollar is preceded by the betrothal (*pariyam podrathu*) which takes place in the bride's home. Bride-price is paid. The bridegroom's parents give *seervarisai* to the bride consisting of a sari, blouse and gold ornaments. *Vethalapakku* (betel leaves and arecanuts) are exchanged between the bridegroom's and bride's parents. They fix the date, time and place of marriage on the betrothal day. A Brahman priest officiates at the marriage ceremony. When the *muhurtham* time arrives, the *thali*-tying function takes place. After this ceremony, a vegetarian feast is given to all the relatives and friends. Both the bride's and bridegroom's families share the marriage expenses equally.

Among the Perumkollar, on death, the body is disposed of on the same day or on the next day after death. They either bury or cremate the dead. The first born are creamated, the others are buried. *Udanpal* or *marunal pal* (milk pouring) ceremony, is performed on the next day or on the third day. Death entails pollution for 16 days and pollution is terminated with the ceremony known as *karumathi* or *periya karyam*. If the deceased person leaves a widow, she is taken near a well or river and other widows remove her *thali*, *kumkum*, *metti* and *valaiyal* (bangles). She is then given a white sari to wear.

Making carts is the traditional occupation of the Perumkollar, but nowadays very few of them are engaged in this. Most of

them are running lathe machines. A few run petty business ventures. Their subsidary occupation is daily wage labour. Most of their children are employed in private workshops as daily wage labourers to support their families.

Most Perumkollar belong to the Saiva sect, each household having its own family deity known as *kuladeivam.* They also worship other goddesses, such as Mariamman and Kali, and deities such as Murugan, Ranganatha and Siva. The most important festival is the annual Mariamman festival celebrated in the Tamil month of *Avani.* They also celebrate regional festivals such as Pongal, Karthigai Deepam, Sivaratri, Deepavali, Vinayaka Chaturthi and Ayudha Puja.

The Perumkollar interdine with the Thevar and Gounder but not with the Vannan, the Parayan and the Chakkiliyan. Their relationship with other communities is cordial. They repair carts and in turn they get paid in cash and kind. They share water sources with other communities. The community has businessmen, teachers and a few white-collar job-holders. Political leaders have emerged from them at the panchayat level.

The Perumkollar send their children to school, but many of them drop out due to poverty. They use both modern and traditional medicare. They favour family planning. They have access to all civic amenities and government programmes.

T.S. NAIDU

PICHUGUNTA

The Pichugunta are distributed in Madras, Salem, Tiruchchirappalli and Chengalpattu Districts. They are also known as Jogi. There is increasing migration of Pichugunta to Tamil Nadu from the southern parts of Andhra Pradesh. Most of them have migrated to their present habitat only a few decades ago.

Thurston (1909) explains that the Pichugunta are beggars and herbalists. Further he writes that the word *picchi* (lit. *picham*, in Telugu, means begging) or *pinchikuntar* means beggars or the lame and they were treated as *kudipinnai* (inferior) by the Vellalar and the Palli of Tamil Nadu.

The mother tongue of the Pichugunta is Telugu. Most of them also speak Tamil, but the elders cannot read the Tamil script. The younger generation uses the Tamil script.

The Pichugunta are nonvegetarian, but do not eat beef. They eat pork and small game. They eat rice, *ragi*, pulses and vegetabls which are cooked in groundnut oil. They drink locally available alcoholic drinks such as *sarayam* (arrack). Both men and women chew betel. Men smoke *beedis* and cigarettes.

The Pichugunta is a homogeneous, endogamous group. Within the community there are different exogamous *gotras* (units for the regulation of marriage). The agnatically linked male members belong to one *gotra*, which traces its origin from a common ancestor.

The Pichugunta do not have any hierarchical stratification among the *gotras*. They perceive themselves as higher in social position than the neighbouring Lander and the Maniyattikarar. However, because of their profession, they perceive their social position as low compared to higher caste groups such as the Mudaliar, the Vanniyar and the Gounder.

The Pichugunta are monogamous. Marriages are normally contracted with father's sister's daughter, mother's brother's daughter and sister's daughter. Sororate is permitted. The *thali bottu* made of gold, silver or brass, is the marriage symbol. The *thali bottu* is strung on a yellow thread. In addition, married women wear toe-rings. Traditionally Rs. 31.25 is paid as *oli* (bride-price). In the third month after marriage the bride's

parents offer utensils, clothes and other necessary articles to the couple to help them establish an independent household.

The rule of residence is patrilocal. Neolocal residence is accepted only after a year or two. The *nayam* (caste council) or elders permit divorce. Traditionally, the husband has to pay Rs. 31.25 to the wife after the divorce. The grown-up children normally live with the father in such cases.

The Pichugunta family consists of the husband who is the head, wife and their unmarried children. The elder son sometimes resides after his marriage with his parents until the younger brothers and sisters are married. A joking relationship exists between a husband's sister and a brother's wife. Sons inherit their father's property equally. Succession is by the eldest son.

Pichugunta women contribute to the family income by begging and working in agricultural fields. While begging, women sing folk-songs. They mostly sing about Nallathangal (a woman who devoted her life to her husband) and Gouramma (a goddess). Women are respected and they participate in all rituals.

Chidbirth, among the Pichugunta, takes place in the conjugal house. During the post-delivery period the mother is forbidden to consume meat, fish and certain vegetables for ten days. Pollution is observed for one week.

When a Pichugunta child is one or two years of age, the parents arrange a simple ceremony called *chevulu kuttedi* (ear-boring) and tonsuring. A number of children belonging to the same *gotra* undergo this cermony at the same time. An elder male member of the same *gotra* or a person belonging to another *gotra* performs this ceremony.

Puberty rites (*pushpavathi*) are simple. The Pichugunta girl is secluded for a week at her first menstrual period. During this period, the girl is not allowed to dine with others in the family and she must avoid a few food items like meat, pork, fish and brinjal.

The Pichugunta marriage ceremony, which lasts for two days, is celebrated at the bridegroom's reisdence. The bride is taken to the bridegroom's residence on the evening before the wedding. Before entering the bridegroom's residence, the bride's relatives take the bride in procession through the

streets of the bridegroom's village. The next morning, the *thali* is tied by the bridegroom. An elderly male member of the community performs a puja and hands over the *thali bottu* to the bridegroom. A feast is served by the bridegroom's family. The couple go to the bride's natal home in the evening and the consummation of the marriage takes place on the same night. They return to the bridegroom's house after spending a few days at the bride's house.

The Pichugunta bury their dead on the same day. Relatives of the deceased observe mourning and pollution for a few days. Pollution is observed for three days within the house where the death has occurred and the purification ritual takes place on the 11th day. They worship their ancestors on festival days.

Traditionally, the Pichugunta are pig-herders. They are also herbal doctors who cure minor ailments. Women usually go out begging. Both men and women now prefer to work as daily wage or agricultural labour. The younger generation are not interested in continuing their traditional occupations of pig-herding or practising herbal medicine. The formal *nayam* solves disputes and quarrels and imposes fines on the guilty.

The Pichugunta are Hindus. Each *gotra* has its own deity called *kula thevudu* (family deity). Such worship is conducted at the time of ear-boring and tonsuring of the children. They also worship Vadakkumalaiyar (Venkatesa Perumal at Tirupati) during the month of *Purattasi* (September-October). They celebrate Pongal and Ugadi (Telugu New Year's Day). The priest who performs their rituals is from the same community.

The Pichugunta accept food from all communities. They share water sources with the Lander, the Maniyattikarar, the Guduguduppaikkarar and the Kattunayakkan. They share a cremation ground with other communities. They participate in village festivals.

The Pichugunta children are sent to school till the age of ten. They are latter encouraged to participate in earning a living. Herbal medicines are used for several ailments such as fever, stomach pain and body pain. They also take modern medicines and favour family planning. They have access to all civic amenities.

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